LIFESTYLE / D1

Licad, son team up in Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra concert

BUSINESS / B1

SM tourism project in Batangas twice the size of Macau

ENTERTAINMENT / G1

Piolo says dream movie 'Wrinkles' to finally push through

NEWS / A2

Palace not bothered by US Congress probe of extrajudicial slays

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
B[illegible] News, Fearless Views
Monday, March 12, 2007 ** Vol. 22 / No. 91

Retired Comelec exec joins election watchdog

By Artyn dela Cruz
Contributor

A RETIRED COMMISSIONER OF THE COMMISSION on Elections has joined a new poll monitoring group called Halalang Marangal (Halal because the structure which he believes led to cheating in the 2004 elections is still in place.

Mehol Sadain has teamed up with a group of

RETIRED, A6

Now is the right time to run, says Pacquiao

By Agaton Zonio
Inquirer Mindanao

GENERAL SANTOS City—Boxing superstar Manny Pacquiao believes this is the right time for him to run—at the peak of

HOW'S IT, A12

PACQUIAO

FIREFIGHTERS try to contain the flames engulfing the Commission on Elections building in Intramuros, Manila.

Fire razes Comelec building

Probers don't rule out sabotage

By Nikko Dizon and Allison W. Lopez

A PREDAWN FIRE RIPPED THROUGH THE Spanish-era building of the Commission on Elections yesterday, causing damage that was unlikely to affect the conduct of the coming May 14 balloting, officials said.

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said that everything the poll body needed for the May polls was in the adjacent main headquarters at the Palacio del Gobernador. "Not one of the documents that we need was in the old building," Abalos told the Inquirer by phone.

The gutted two-story wooden building housed the offices of the Comelec executive director, deputy executive director for operations, deputy executive director for administration, the education and information division, the records division, statistics office, administration services department, the Comelec

FIRE RAZES, A10

3 caught copying ballots

By Nikko Dizon

THREE MEN CLAIMING TO BE casual employees were caught inside the National Printing Office (NPO) a week ago while allegedly copying the serial numbers of official ballots to be used in the May 14 midterm elections, the Inquirer has learned.

Inquirer sources said in separate interviews that the Commission on Elections had been informed of the incident. But Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos said he had not seen the report.

"Yes, I will call for an investigation if that is reported to me," Abalos told the Inquirer by phone yesterday. Abalos said that if the report were true, he wanted the men identified.

One of the sources, however, said the incident was discussed on Saturday during a conference between Comelec and NPO officials, held at the NPO office in Quezon City.

"The Comelec printing committee has, I think, asked to have a meeting with NPO chief Felipe

I CAUGHT, A6

A FIREMAN saves some documents from the burning offices.

AERIAL photo shows what's left of the Comelec compound the morning after the fire.

Cop pushes Pasig shabu conviction

By Nancy Carvajal

A TOP POLICE OFFICER SAID THE conviction of the people behind the once-sprawling P900-million shabu market in Pasig City would be the centerpiece of the government's war on illegal drugs, and warned that the dismantling of the ring against its supposed operator could demoralize law enforcers.

In an interview with the Inquirer on Friday, Director Geary Barias expressed dismay at the obstacles thrown in the way of the prosecution of those behind the "one-stop shabu restaurant," which the police dismantled in a raid in February last year that resulted in the arrest of about 300 people.

Barias also lamented recent pronouncements by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez about the supposed weakness of the police evidence.

The dismissal of the case could raise questions about the government's stunt-

COP PUSHES, A6

Police raid reenacts repressive methods of Marcos regime

By Amando Doronila

THE POLICE RAID ON THE HOME OF Rep. Satur Ocampo last weekend throws the country back to 1972 during the mass roundup of opponents of the regime of President Ferdinand Marcos following the declaration of martial law.

Accounts of the raid by Ocampo's wife, Carolina Malay, and household members vividly reproduce the canon of the arbitrary methods of the Marcos regime and the hysterical atmosphere of the antisubversion witch-hunt of the era.

Those born after Sept. 11, 1972, have their knowledge of martial law blurred, based on the recollections of victims of the crackup.

Those of voting age in May 2007 could get a vivid snapshot of what it was like in 1972, from the reports or TV footage (if there are any), of how Ocampo's house was raided in the manner of the mass arrests of 1972.

ANALYSIS

The raid is a grotesque reenactment of the repressive methods of the 1970s. It impresses upon Filipinos how anachronistic is the regime that masquerades as a democracy. It underlines the point that it is out of place in the rallies of the democratization wave in developing countries since the 1980s.

According to first-hand witness accounts, including Malay's, the police team forced its way into their house in Heroes Hill, Quezon City, serving only a photocopy of an arrest warrant, with a wrong address.

The warrant was based on multiple criminal charges stemming Ocampo and other members of the Communist Party

POLICE RAID, A12

BIR receipt drive yields massive tax cheating

By Doris C. Dumlao

A POPULAR GOVERNMENT RAFFLE program has uncovered massive tax cheating by more than half of the 140,000 establishments whose receipts were submitted by consumers to the Bureau of Internal Revenue for a chance to win P1 million.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves had pledged to the global donor community that the government would aggressively pursue the prosecution and conviction of tax evaders, smugglers and erring Department of Finance officials.

"Our Pinoys sa Resibo (Wins for Receipt) campaign should help us further strengthen enforcement by providing additional information on noncompliant taxpayers, including those issuing fake receipts," Teves said in a report submitted to the Philippine Development Forum in Cebu City last week.

BIR RECEIPT, A6

To have, bold, cherish –but sleep separately

NOT SINCE THE VICTORIAN AGE OF starched sheets and saintly manners, builders and architects in the United States say, have there been so many orders for separate bedrooms. Or separate sleeping nooks. Or his-and-her wings.

In interviews, couples and sociologists say that often it has nothing to do with sex. More likely, it has to do with snoring. Or with children crying. Or with getting up and heading for the gym at 5:30 in the morning. Or with sending e-mail messages until well after midnight.

TO HAVE, A12

Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Armor Inclusive cans will face mostly cloudy skies with scattered light rain. Luzon Metropolitan has mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

Palace unfazed by US hearings on killings

By Michael Lim Ubac and Lala B. Salaverria

MALACAÑANG APPEARS UNPERTURBED BY THE MOVE OF THE United States Congress to conduct hearings on the political killings in the Philippines.

National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales said the hearings will not resumed for the US Congress to investigate human occurring outside America.

"The US knows the reasons of an investigation. Maayos naman ang US. (The US is OK)," he said.

Gonzales said the inquiry was neither an affront to the Philippines' sovereignty nor a breach of courtesy among nations.

The Palace however is confident whether it will send a top envoy to make representations with the US Congress, he said.

Rep. Tom Lantos (Democrat, Calif.), chair of the House foreign relations committee, will preside over a hearing on the Philippine human rights issue at 10 a.m. on March 14 in Washington D.C., while Sen. Barbara Boxer (Democrat, Calif.), chair of the East Asia Sub-Committee of the Senate, will conduct an inquiry at 2:30 p.m. on the same day.

The hearings were the result of grassroots lobbying by Filipino-American organizations that included the United Methodist Church and the militant party-list group Partido ng Manggagawa (PMP).

Junior Secretary Raul Gonzalez, however, believes the US Congress should not investigate an internal matter like the extrajudicial killings in the Philippines.

But he said the hearings would be an opportunity for the Philippine government to clear its name and refute allegations it was behind the killings.

Gonzalez said it was up to the Philippine government whether or not to participate in the hearings.

"I think it's something that should not take place. But if I remember correctly, even during the time of Cory (Former President Corazon Aquino), there was a hearing in the US Congress when Filipinos testified. There is a precedent, we sent a delegation to the US to testify on human rights," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez had earlier blasted a United Nations special rapporteur who was in Manila to probe the spate of killings for saying the Philippine military was involved in these.

Militant groups have blamed the killings on the military.

Gonzalez said he thought the International Bar Association had been misinformed about the Philippine government's role in the killings.

"There are people in the country who are dragging the Philippines (before) the US Congress) for their own propaganda purposes," he said.

But the **defense establishment is not bothered** at all by the US Congress' move to investigate the political killings.

"We're not alarmed ... we are not affected," **defense spokesperson** Undersecretary Ernesto Carolina said, noting that it was not the first time the US Congress had scheduled hearings on matters involving other countries.

Carolina reiterated that the defense and military establishment were not investigating the killings "one by one."

Although on the run, Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo yesterday said he would "participate" in the US hearings.

"I will participate in the hearings," he said in a statement posted on the party-list group's website yesterday.

Ocampo, however, did not say how he exactly planned to join the hearings. With report from Christine D. Avendaño, Ehrenton U. Esguerra and AP/Cabacungan Jr.

Satur arrest part of new offensive vs Reds – Palace

By Michael Lim Ubac

TAGBILARAN CITY—THE ARREST of Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo is part of the government's renewed offensive against communist rebels, following the failed move to intimidate the communists **into the political mainstream**, a Malacañang official said yesterday.

National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzalez told the reporters **the Arroyo administration** had sought the arrest of the outspoken **leftist lawmaker because of his past** ties and his link to the Communist Party of the Philippines-National Democratic Front (CPP-NDF).

"We're establishing the legal parameters of the matter... that armed rebellion is no longer acceptable as a means of achieving political change," Gonzalez said.

He denied the government had abandoned the renewed policy of countering top communist rebels in southeast their crusade through parliamentary struggle.

The Philippine National Police, meanwhile, has asked the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) to issue arrest warrants or "red notices" for two Ms. Sison, Luis Jalandoni and others for multiple murder.

Sison is the founding chair of the CPP and its military wing, the New People's Army (NPA). Jalandoni is head of the NDF.

The Interpol red notice is the closest instrument to an international arrest warrant in use today," PNP Director General Oscar Calderon said in a statement.

"The same notice is also being sought for other co-respondents of Sison who may have fled abroad and who are also the subject of warrants of arrest issued by the courts," Calderon said.

Sison, Jalandoni and Ocampo are among 53 persons named arrest warrants for multiple murder law enforcers by the regional trial court in Leyte.

The PEP and Philippine Army al- so started a manhunt for the rest of the CPP/NPP officers and members who face multiple murder charges.

The accused have been indicted on 15 counts of murder allegedly committed during the purge of "deep penetration agents/counter-intelligence" within the CPP/NPA between 1985 and 1991.

The remains of the 15 murder victims were among 67 bodies exhumed by forensic investigators in the 5000- "killing field" in Leyte on Aug. 28, 2006.

CPP spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal denied the charges against Sison and Ocampo, saying the two were in military detention during the regime of the former President Marcos when the alleged killings occurred in Leyte.

Sison was in prison from 1977 to 1986. He left the Philippines in 1986 for a speaking engagement and never returned. He sought asylum in the Netherlands in 1987 and became the subject of peace talks with the government.

Jalandoni, a former Catholic priest, has been out of the country **since the 1970s, according to Rosal.**

Ocampo, who has gone into hiding, plans to turn himself in this week to face the charges in the regional trial court in Leyte said his lawyer Jemar Capulong.

Bernardo Monge of the militant party-list group Bindigansis, who is also chair of the Nacionalang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamahayag ng Pilipinas (The nationalist), maintained that Ocampo had nothing to do with the crimes being imputed to him.

"The Arroyo government wants Bayan Muna Representative Ocampo to leave the parliament of the streets, mainstream politics and his pro-people and field work in Congress and rejoin the underground movement in a vain attempt to eliminate the most effective critic of the ruling political syndicate in Malacañang, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the House of Representatives," Monge said. With reports from Christine D. Avendaño, Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon, Joey A. Gabieta, Inquirer Visayas, AFP, AP

'Too early to celebrate gov't-MILF deal'

COTABATO CITY—GOVERNMENT NEGOTIA- tors and the country's largest Muslim guerrilla group are talking of a breakthrough in efforts to end one of the world's oldest Muslim rebellions, but they may be overly optimistic.

Analysts and members of this city, which is in the midst of the area where the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) operates, say there are too many complexities in an insurgency now into its fourth decade for it to be easily resolved.

Government negotiators have offered the Moros—Muslim inhabitants of the southern Philippines—**the right of self-determination**, which could lead to a homeland of their own where they would enjoy considerable autonomy but not independence.

MILF chair Al Haj Murad has called the offer an advance in the peace process, which has achieved little in years of negotiations and has often been interrupted by renewed fighting.

Speaking to reporters at his Jungle camp on Saturday, Murad said hurdles remained, but the new government offer has "given some light to the negotiations."

As he made the declaration, the MILF warned on its website yesterday that a fragile **four-year ceasefire with the government was** on the verge of collapse.

It said the ceasefire might collapse due to the "military's arrogance and defiance."

It said the MILF would not take the military's repeated aggression "sitting down."

Zachary Abuza, an expert on Southeast Asian politics at Simmons College in Boston, said in commenting the upbeat outlook of the negotiators: "I understand they are optimistic about something simply because the government is trying to think creatively for the first time ever."

"I think they are overly optimistic because there are a lot of complicating factors in the agreement," Abuza's AFP

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DOLE: RP must hike productivity

THE PHILIPPINE NEEDS TO IMPROVE on labor productivity to attain a globally competitive work force, according to the National Wages and Productivity Commission.

The NWPC, an attached agency of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), on Friday said the Philippines had yet to improve on its productivity to reach its goal of sustainable economic growth and global competitiveness.

In 2005, the Philippines ranked only 5th-11 among Asian countries in terms of productivity level. That year, it had an average productivity of $9,613.50, the NWPC said.

Among Southeast Asian countries cited excluding Burma and East Timor, the Philippines was third lowest, ranking only higher than Cambodia and Vietnam.

Topping the list were Hong Kong ($38,254.00) and Singapore ($47,621.21).

Labor productivity is the average output per employed person. It is computed by dividing the annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by the number of employed people.

NWPC officer in charge Executive Director Esther Guiam said the agency, in coordination with the different DOLE agencies, will set up a framework that would boost the efforts of the government on productivity awareness.

Guiam said the framework will be anchored on the objectives of promoting productivity improvement and gain sharing toward competitiveness and poverty alleviation. Jerome Aning

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NINE MORE PARAÑAQUE SUBDIVISIONS CONNECTED TO MAYNILAD. After 22 years of relying on water vendors and diaspeaks for their water supply, about 2,750 households at Tahanan Village, Jardelaneville, Mon-El, Teoville 1, 2 & 3, Goodwill 3, Maywood and Mellon Subdivisions and 251 commercial establishments along President's Avenue at Barangay BF, Parañaque finally began getting water directly from their faucets with the formal inauguration last March 3, 2007 of the reactivated and re-energized 750mm pipeline along President's Ave. No less than President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo opened the ceremonial faucet witnessed by (from left) MWSS Administrator Lorenzo Jarrera, Brgy. BF chairwoman Florencia Amurao, MWSS senior deputy administrator Macra Cruz, Parañaque City mayor Jun Bernabe, vice mayor Anjo Yllana, Congressman Eduardo Zialcita, Maynilad officials led by VP for Operations and Engineering Ilmeo Gonzales and Parañaque/Muntinlupa Business Center manager Regino Cruz. Parañaque's water supply has tremendously improved with the "Bring More Water to the South" (BMWS) program of Maynilad under which water from the other parts of the West Zone concession which are normally lost to illegal connections or leaks are recovered and reallocated to the south, thus boosting the water availability and pressure in Parañaque.

Acting chief of printing body faces graft raps

By Norman Bordadora

THE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF the National Printing Office is facing graft charges, among which the most she replaced temporarily in connection with an NPO award of a printing job allegedly worth P91 million in April 2006.

A complaint before the Ombudsman shows NPO-OIC Marilou de Guzman is a co-respondent of NPO Director Felipe Hondrono in the alleged rigged bidding that had resulted in Hondrono's suspension by Malacañang late last year.

The action against Hondrono, recommended by the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission, was implemented on Oct. 4 and could be lifted by Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita on Oct. 30. (Story related elsewhere on Pages A3 and A7.)

The complaint filed before the PAGC involving the P91 million worth of printing jobs for the Bureau of Customs in April 2006 was lodged by former NPO supplier Senate Printing Corp.

Ombudsman's case

The Ombudsman case, on the other hand, was filed by Bartolome Sio, another NPO supplier that felt aggrieved by the alleged rigged bidding for the customs forms in April last year.

Both Bautista and Sioco have been disqualified by the NPO under Hondrono for alleged commission of government procurement processes.

In both the PAGC and Ombudsman cases filed by both printers, De Guzman was named chair of the NPOs bids and awards committee.

The two firms alleged that they were prevented from taking part in NPO's April 10, 2006, bidding for the printing of the BOC's "consumable forms" and that they were told the bidding was only for jobs worth P5 million.

'Predetermined' winners

It was later learned that the contracts worth a total of more than P91 million were given to "preferred," alleged "predetermined winning bidders"—Advance Computer Forms Inc. and Holy Family Printing Corp.

It was further alleged that the award was made on the same day the bidding was conducted.

"[Even] assuming evidence admitting that the budget certified by the Bureau of Customs for the (April 10, 2006) shoe bidding was in the amount of P5 million only, still the mind-boggling award of P91,758,268 made by respondent (Hondrono) and the NPO-BAC (including its chair De Guzman) to the same favored and predetermined winning bidders . . . shall certainly qualify it for the 'Greatest Book of World Records,'" read Sioco's Ombudsman complaint.

The complaint was filed on June 13, 2006, and signed by one of Bautista's owners, Bautista Sato Jr.

3 caught copying ballots

Story on page A7

Sandoval," one of the sources said on condition of anonymity as no one has been authorized to speak about the incident.

Sandoval went on leave on March 1, after his brother, Senator Jose Jinggoy Estrada, was appointed media coordinator for the administration's personal spokesman. Sandoval has been implicated in several graft cases in the printing office. (See related story above and on Page A7.)

Confidential material

The source said there was another government employee involved. The source said the names of the three men, whose names were not immediately known, was still unclear.

According to the Inquirer sources, a member of the Comelec's anti-fraud unit caught the three men taking down the serial numbers of the official ballots and the photo (autograph) (ink and stain) where these ballots were "assigned."

One source said a supervisor who saw the men was surprised by what they were doing. "It was a good thing they weren't able to copy a lot," said this source.

The sources explained that this information was highly confidential and was supposed to be known only to the "top officials of the printing committee."

Restricted area

The three men were in the NPO pre-press area, where the inputs of the official ballot forms are kept before these are printed out. The area is highly restricted.

"They were not supposed to be there," the source said.

The three men were reportedly escorting Comelec auditors and had the access to them issued by the agency.

The sources, however, could not say what happened to the men or whether charges had been brought against them.

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Cop pushes Pasig shabu conviction

From page A1

ity in stamping out the P700-billion illegal drugs industry, in which shabu is the biggest item, Bataan suggested.

Bataan heads the Philippine National Police Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force (Aidsotf), the agency prosecuting Amie Kristin Borromeo, alleged owner of the 2,000-square-meter compound of shabu-smelly

morning has denied the allegation and pointed to Jaime Pulao...whom he described as his "biological brother"—as the real operator.

Pulao is the main police witness against Borromeo.

"I don't know, but he [Borromeo] must be that influential that he can make things happen, for him to be able to derail the issuing of his case warrant and to [proceed] smoothly," Bataan said.

"If the case would be dismissed, I could not find a word to describe the [lack of] determination of the government in pursuing an end to these drug problems," Bataan added.

Shabu is the drug of choice of Filipino users. Officials estimated there were around 6.7 million regular users of shabu in the country as of 2005.

Authorities believed the Pasig shabu market, which started in 1997, had grown to a P60-million industry by the time police demolished it last year.

Tug of war

Pulao is himself facing a murder charge and is at the center of a tug of war within the judiciary.

Bataan said an order from the Manila Oriental Regional Trial Court in Iriga (Misc) in Cagayan de Oro City to empower the murder charge had caused concern among law enforcers.

The court had ordered PNP Director General Oscar Calderon to bring Pulao to Cagayan de Oro for his arraignment on March 13.

Pulao claims he served as the right-hand man of Borromeo in operating the shabu smelly.

In June 2006, or three months after the Ong raid, a kidnapping and murder case was filed against Pulao in Marawi City by the family of Borromeo's wife, Thelma Tan-Cua Borromeo, over the alleged kidnapping and killing of her brother.

Danger to main witness

Bataan said the first division of the Supreme Court granted an Aidsotf request for Pulao to be enrolled in the witness protection program.

But a five-division vote later overturned by the high court's third division, which said the case should be tried in Cagayan de Oro, Bataan said.

"We are not doing here's one branch of the Supreme Court saying it's OK, but [this was] reversed after a motion for reconsideration was filed," he said.

Bataan contended that bringing Pulao to Cagayan de Oro posed a danger for the state witness.

He also said that the Misamis court had already fined two police officers in the amount of P50,000 each for failure to bring Pulao to Cagayan de Oro on Feb. 28 for his arraignment.

Let's stop rhetoric

"The PNP chief would be mad for contempt if Pulao is not brought to Cagayan de Oro on March 13," Bataan added.

Shooting his dismay, Bataan said: "We always come up with rhetoric. Let's help the police, help the government, help etc., but in this reality of the [winning case, we are disturbed] by so many issues, particularly pronouncements that tend to weaken the case."

Secretary Gonzalez had ordered a reinvestigation of the case against Borromeo, saying the evidence against him was weak.

Bataan said he could not find any reason for Gonzalez to say that the evidence was weak when, in the first place, it was Gonzalez's own people at the DOJ who found enough evidence to prosecute the case.

"He saying that the evidence against Borromeo is weak demoralizes his own people," Bataan said.

Protecting Borromeo

Gonzalez had also said that Pulao was a "puppet" witness.

Talking with reporters in January, Gonzalez declared that Pulao would be testifying only to the police to cover money from Borromeo.

Bataan had another lament.

"I find it ironic that an accused [Borromeo] when going to court is protected by a throng of [national] police and [members] of investigation agency complete with bullet-proof vests, while the witness (Pulao) who goes to court on his own accord is deprived of protection by his own government," he said.

Gonzalez ordered Pulao dropped from the government's Witness Protection Program in December last year.

Bataan said Pulao was also a witness in a case before the Anti-Illegal Logging Council (AMLC).

"This is also a test case for the AMLC. [It] wants to see who is [responsible] and Pulao is also the material witness," he said.

He claimed more than P100 million worth of Borromeo's property was being investigated by the AMLC.

"Where did the money to buy these properties come from?" Bataan asked. *With a report from Inquirer Research*

Retired Comelec ...

From page A1

retired government officials, professionals, IT specialists and members of the academe to ensure that the May 14 elections are credible, clean and transparent.

"I had a sense that stunning tech since during the 2004 elections but I have no army of praying it because they took me out of Belmonte [2]," Tañada said.

He warns that "anything could happen" because "the atmosphere is still hot."

Tañada was part of the Comelec whiz when the controversial Virgilio Garillo—was a member of the poll body.

Garillo was the Comelec commissioner on the infamous "Hello Garci" tapes, the wiretapped conversations between him and President Macapagal-Arroyo in which the President was heard asking about her total over Bernardo Dee Jr.

The opposition has claimed that the tapes showed that Ms. Arroyo rigged the 2004 presidential election. The President has denied any wrongdoing.

Widespread

Tañada disclosed elements on his assessment that the "system for possible widespread cheating" was still intact but he said that his last conversation with Habal was by way of setting on the things he could act do when he was still with the Comelec.

"We had our own respective tasks and areas of responsibilities. So it is communication only," he said. "I am concerned with Habal's assigned region," Tañada said.

Aside from Tañada, another prominent member of Habal is retired Brig. Gen. Francisco Gudani, who along with Lt. Col. Antonio Trillanes IV led the 2003 mutiny.

Gudani and Trillanes are being court-martial for violating internal security from their respective posts not to appear before the Senate inquiry.

Gudani said he chose to join the poll watch group over moving for public office, as he had been asked by leaders of the opposition to run for a seat in the Senate.

"I am sure that if I were to run, I will get millions of votes from the Bote again sector, the military, the police and the areas where I was assigned as a military officer. But the question is, Will my candidacy really be supported in the crucial hours after the closing of the polling precincts?" he said. Gudani is a member of Christ's Commission Fellowship.]

He said there was "simply no way" a poor person could win in the political culture.

Flexible

Gudani expressed concern about a statement by Defense Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane that the military "will be flexible" in performing possible election duties.

Gudani pointed out that Ebdane's statement was the opposite of the earlier unanimous decision by former Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita that soldiers be assigned far from elections duties. One assigned last November were billeteers with certain Cabinet members on Charter change.

"Secretary Cruz was really bent on making sure the soldiers, from the enlisted men to the officers, are totally apolitical. Unfortunately, he's out of the [800- (Department of National Defense)," Gudani said.

But Gudani acknowledged that the military was important to the conspiracy and ballot box interference like Lanao did for where voters have to wait six hours just to cast their vote."

Citizens' audit

Collecting and immediately posting the precinct-level election results are the primary focus of Tañada, and another member of the group, IT specialist Rubenzy Vertido.

"The system that we have developed under Max [Mirano] is simple and easily understood that any sector or group can participate," Vertido said.

Ermita seen sitting on Evardone case

By Norman Bordadora

IT SEEMS EXECUTIVE Secretary Eduardo Ermita is taking his sweet time signing the dismissal and permanent disqualification from the government service...

The one-page ruling... complaints filed against Evardone by NPC suppliers before Ermita's office...

Evardone's dismissal in connection with Beethoven's complaint was recommended to Ermita on Feb. 13, while the dismissal related to Sunshine's complaint was sent to the executive secretary on Feb. 26.

The Palace documents—furnished yesterday by sources familiar with the Office of the President's actions on the PAGC recommendations—seemed to belie Senator's pronouncement that Ermita had yet to look over the PAGC findings after he went on leave "because of a death in the family."

"It's true that there was a death in the family. But [Ermita] looked over the cases before he went on leave," one Malacañang source, who sought anonymity for lack of authority to speak, said.

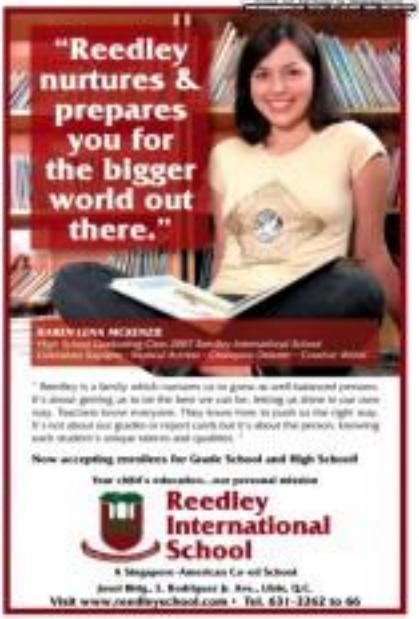
The NPC is mandated by law to print ballots and other election paraphernalia.

Whereas the NPC vested that mandate in past elections and subcontracted the printing of ballots, election experts said certification of candidacy Evardone and that the time, he worked for the NPC to exclusively print the election forms for the coming May polls. (See related story on Page 12.)

Evardone said he had taken a leave of absence from the NPC so as not to compromise the agency's credibility in light of his brother's appointment as Team Unity's media director.

Named in his place as officer in charge was Marietta de Villa-Haque, chair of the NPC's bids and awards committee.

De Erasmo, meanwhile, is a no-nonsense with, Evardone is a case filed before the Ombudsman by Beethoven to convince with the allegedly anomalous award of a P95 million printing contract for the Bureau of Customs to a group of allegedly favored suppliers.



BIR receipt drive yields …

From page A1

From June to August 2006, Teves reported that the Western Mindoro campaign had resulted in the gathering by the BIR of some 7.6 million receipts covering about 140,000 establishments.

"Of these establishments, only 52.6 percent had valid Tax Out Identification Numbered, about 53.2 percent had no records of income tax payments with the BIR, while the rest had made only minimal income tax payments," Teves said.

He said the BIR Central Office had disseminated the information to the regional districts so they could conduct investigations and audits.

In light of the global donor community's challenge to sustain the Davao momentum, Teves said the government would further strengthen revenue collection by the BIR and the Bureau of Customs.

The government hopes to raise 14.3 percent more revenue this year than last year, with collections by the BIR and BOC projected to rise by 17.8 percent and 13.2 percent, respectively.

TEVES: Prompts nationwide campaign should help strengthen the enforcement of tax laws.

"We are also fully implementing this year the Lateral Attrition Law. The respective revenue performance boards of the BIR and BOC have met and are now finalizing the guidelines on the distribution of rewards and appreciation of sanctions," Teves said.

He also noted that the Department of Finance recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Trade and Industry. Philippine Economic Zone Authority and the BIR to more clearly define the rules regarding tax-free tax holidays and the 5 percent gross income tax.

Plugging loopholes

The memorandum will further tighten the implementation of the country's income laws by plugging some of the loopholes that result in system abuse and leakage, Teves said.

"The BOP will also audit the performance of the rate collection agencies to identify and address weaknesses that hamper collection efficiency," he said.

"Since these tax administration measures may not have an immediate impact on collections, new measures may be needed to further improve our tax effort. To this end, we will continue working with Congress on revenue-enhancing measures, such as rationalizing fiscal incentives and restructuring income taxes," he said.

Teves also vowed to undertake a more proactive management of debt portfolio by taking advantage of opportunities to enrich maturity, reduce interest cost and rely more on the domestic market for financing requirements.

He said the DOF would get 67 percent of government financing from the domestic market and the balance from abroad.

"In addition, we expect our debt-to-GDP (gross domestic product) ratio to decline this year to 58 percent from 65 percent last year," the secretary said.

Teves also noted efforts to step up the sale of power and non-power assets. The government sold last week further tranches of indirect shares in Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.

"We are now working on the disposition of government's 67 big-ticket items, specifically our shares in Meralco and San Miguel. We also continue to work with PNALM to accelerate the privatization of our power (generation companies) and Transco," he said.

The government also assured the global donor community that it would tighten its watch on its corporate expenses, by developing institution-specific performance contracts, starting with the National Food Authority.

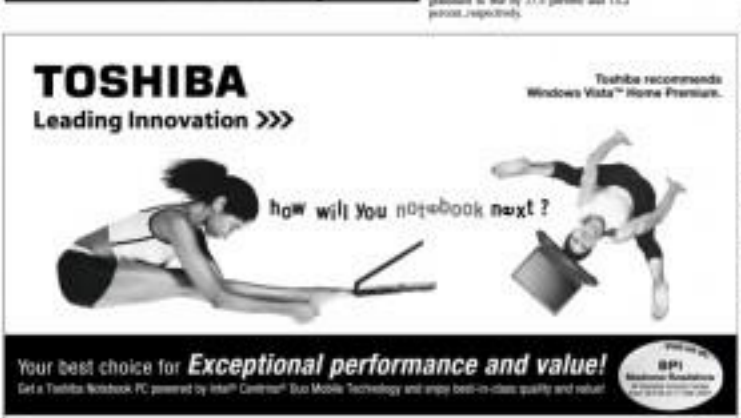
"We are now discussing with Ausaid's (official development arm of Australia) the results of its study on the NFA and its recommendations," he said.

He said the Asian Development Bank was also working on similar performance contracts for the Light Railway Administration, Home Guaranty Corp., National Development Corp. and Philippine National Railways.

"In 2007, the consolidated public sector deficit should further narrow to P62.8 billion or 1.2 percent of GDP, due largely to the reduced national government deficit, the high-er investment returns of our pension agencies and the improved fiscal position of our local government units," Teves said.

The PDF 2007 Meeting, co-hosted by Teves and World Bank country director Joachim von Amsberg, was attended by delegations from Australia, Austria, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The international organizations that took part in the meeting included the Asian Development Bank, European Commission, International Monetary Fund, Kuwait Fund, Oper Fund for International Development, Saudi Fund for Development and various United Nations agencies.



The Daily Gospel

Monday, March 12, 2007
2nd Week of Lent

1st Reading: 2 Kgs 5:1-15
Gospel: Luke 4:24-30

Jesus added, "No prophet is honored in his own country. Truly I say to you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over the whole land; yet Elijah was sent to any of them, but to a widow of Zarephath, in the country of Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha, the prophet, and yet not one of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."

On hearing these words, the whole assembly became indignant. They rose up and brought him out of the town, to the edge of the hill on which their town was built, intending to throw him down the cliff. But he passed through their midst and went on his way.

Commentary

Naaman is an army commander, a country of Israel. But he is also a leper, and he tried for his servant girl to capture in Israel to a Hebrew prophet named Elisha. He is the one and so he does have to heal for the cure of the Jordan. His servants help him and he becomes like a child and believes. Now Naaman that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel" (so another who came to believe through the help of his young captive and a prophet).

Jesus, the prophet of God, preaches in his own family and neighbors in Nazareth but they refuse to take his words to heart. And to talk about what they will see and hear and do not see or hear, something more of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, and Elisha and the Syrian Naaman. And so did he wonder through them though they were wondering pagan Samaritan Gentile men people were to establish, as they were to be the people of God. And so it is with the Jesus words keep from them who long have seen and—they have heard (or think we are) well. Jesus and you do see hear and repent? Or is Jesus walking away from us?

Saudi royals buying into Bohol resort

By Michael Lim Ubac

TAGBILARAN CITY—SAUDI ARABIAN ROYAL family is buying up a chunk of Panglao Island in Bohol, where they intend to put up a six-star resort.

President Macapagal-Arroyo herself disclosed the move in a speech at the Bohol Youth Day celebrations on Saturday at the Carlos P. Garcia Sports Complex here where she also talked mainly for Team Unity-oriented here.

The President made the disclosure to prove "the Philippines has regained world confidence because of its growing economy and stabilizing politics."

Ms Arroyo said the Saudi Arabian royal family, through its Kingdom Holdings, expressed their intention to invest $1.56 million in Panglao through a tie-up with Ayala Land.

"They would like to buy the whole Peninsular property to put up a six-star resort (to be administered by the) Saffin family," said the President to the delight of the crowd.

Businessman Tomas Alfonso owns and runs the Bohol Beach Club on Panglao Island, one of the best dive sites in the country.

During her visit to Riyadh in May 2006, the President held talks with King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz and asked him "to recycle their petrodollars that the could come into direct investments in the Philippines."

In Bohol, Ms Arroyo also announced the surge of Philippine exports to its highest level in seven years, adding that this indicated "the productivity and resiliency of the Filipino."

The President said the 27.3 percent export jump to $4.17 billion in January was achieved despite the continuing strength of the peso and the relative volatility of overseas markets.

The National Statistics Office reported this day that key sectors—banks and electronic shipments—accounted for more than half of the total exports.

Boracay traders' lament

BORACAY ISLAND, Aklan—Business owners here are pushing for the designation of a single authority to oversee the development and rehabilitation of this world-famous island.

The current situation is confusing, with the local and provincial governments, the Department of Tourism and the Philippine Tourism Authority and other government agencies all implementing programs and policies on the island, said businessman Philipp Rothfeder.

Rothfeder is chair of the Boracay Chamber of Commerce Inc. (BCCI) executive committee which met with tourism secretary Joseph "Joe" Durano on Friday.

Rothfeder said the business that while these agencies were working to develop the island, "this is not toward one direction."

Durano said he recognized the problem, but he said the local government must "what is important is that all of us agree on a common agenda so our actions will complement one another."

Later, he told the business, "I sympathize with them and I understand why they feel the need for a long direction."

But he said the current situation was a reality the stakeholders had to live with.

During the meeting, Durano announced the crafting of a new master plan for the island, which he acknowledged was overcrowded.

The master plan will include wider roads and a drainage system, he said.

"The demolishing or starting from scratch, with all the development already in place, is impossible," he said, to allay the fears of local business owners the plan would affect their businesses. Aileen C. Sinobe Jr

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Oreta: I was treated badly by opposition, that's why I left

By Cynthia G. Balana

MANILAMAN (2ND—TEAM EIGHT SENATORial candidate Trade Secretary Jurgette Oreta hasn't hurt feelings over the way she was cast aside by the Genuine Opposition (GO) in favor of her nephew, Benigno Aquino III, with whom her relations are now apparently strained.

In a candid tell-all with reporters during a lull in the administration team's campaign sortie here, Oreta admitted she had felt bad coming former President Joseph Estrada appointing Secretary Rosendo Fes to replace her in the ministerial lineup.

Estrada, the acknowledged leader of GO, did not fight for her, lamented Oreta, whose swift political jig during Estrada's 2001 impeachment trial helped trigger the public outrage that led to People Power II which toppled the Chief President.

"That was the thing that made me decide to quit and become active (in) that, showing ourselves (I was already on the Estrada camp) ... feeling (a) insecurity (over a) Secretary (I felt that) they were only waiting for Secretary," she said.

Oreta and Secretary's brother, former President Cory Aquino, are on opposite sides of the political fence. Cory was one of the leaders of the revolt against Estrada.

Oreta told reporters she then talked to her nephew about the problem but he said he was not sure if the Liberal Party to which he belonged would align itself with the opposition because he was involved in putting up a so-called Third Force.

"I told, 'What?' Sabi ko pinagsasabay-sabay na ako (I told, 'What?' I told the protagonists to do their own jobs, keep separating multilayer-ships. Discuss matters also. (They are causing me stain and yet your group is not even sure of aligning itself with the opposition. I was in a bad position.)

"So I called up President Erap. I said, sir, I will make it easy for you, huwag na ho kayong mahirapan magdesisyon, dito ko lang ho ang mali (you don't need to make a decision, I will just leave)," she said.

Oreta said she felt bad first side did not stop her from leaving.

"Well, maybe I consoled myself in his room, I thought he would fight for me," Oreta said in Filipino.

Regarding her relations with Senator, Oreta said she had not talked to him since early this year when the organization of a Third Force was being considered.

But in response to a statement reportedly made by Secretary Ceferino Paredes Jr. that Oreta is thinking that he would ask the Commission on Elections to consider all "Aquino" votes in his favor, she said: "Hi-can have it ... except when the ballots contain the name Noynoy or Senator Aquino."

In the past, she had used Tessie and Teresa Aquino as her names on the ballots.

If the ballot contains only the name "Aquino," I will not count it, she said, adding: "pwede na pon akong-akong na lang kay Noy (I will let it go for Noy's sake)," referring to the main opposition leader who was her brother and Mayumi's father.

But Oreta said that, in the end, it was the Comelec that would decide the matter, considering that a Theodore Aquino was also fighting for his right to use the name if his appeal via for senator were granted.

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The third child of a medical doctor and a pharmacist, President Garcia had always been fascinated with Mathematics and Science. This fascination led her to her earning a BS Chemistry degree from the University of the Philippines, where she graduated cum laude in 1963. That same year, she topped the Philippine Board of Chemistry licensure examinations.

She worked as a research aide in the International Rice Research Institute for a while before pursuing her doctorate degree at the Ohio State University. In 1969, she obtained her Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry, after which, she worked for one year as a post-doctoral fellow at the IUN Nucleic Acid Research Institute in Irvine, California. She was offered to work in the Chester Beatty Cancer Institute in London – an offer she turned down for personal reasons.

She has held various academic and managerial positions within the last four decades, mostly in UP.

However, President Garcia is best known among academicians for her stint at the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) as Commissioner from November 1998 to July 1999 and Chair from July 1999 up to her retirement in May 2005. Under her leadership, CHED instituted its mandate establishing among others the policy for autonomy in tertiary learning institutions.

After her retirement, President Garcia became a consultant for UE from August 2005 to July 2004. In 2005, Chairman and concurrently Acting President F. O. Domingo offered to bar the UE presidency.

President Garcia has, as a researcher, published 20 scientific papers in peer-reviewed national and international journals, and is author or co-author of more than 100 papers on issues related to science, education, technology, environment and gender.

President Garcia is a recipient of the Outstanding Professional of the Year 1996 in Chemistry Award from the Professional Regulation Commission, an Achievement Award in Chemistry from the National Research Council of the Philippines and the Achievement Award in Chemical Education from the Philippine Federation of Chemical Societies. She also holds a Doctor of Laws degree, Honoris Causa, from the De La Salle University.

President Garcia is married to Dr. Jerrold L. Garcia, Chair of the Physics Department of the Ateneo de Manila University.

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ELECTION '07

Pimentel's ma hits morality, dynasty raps

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LUCENA CITY—LIKE A PROTECTIVE BROTHER, Loretta "Ting" Pimentel has defended her family from charges of lack of morals and accusing a dynasty after her son, Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III, joined the Senate race under the Genuine Opposition banner even as his father, Sen. Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr., was already member of the chamber.

"Morally wrong? What would be immoral are those acts that violate the Ten Commandments. Nene, Ting's namesake, has no record of any act or any crime long ang sinasabi ng Sampung Utos (the Ten Commandments) prohibits a son from running for the Senate if his father is already in it?" Pimentel asked during SOS "Talakayang Bayan" (town meeting) held here last Saturday.

Article 2, Section 26 of the Constitution prohibits that "the state should guarantee equal access to opportunities for public service but prohibits political dynasties as may be defined by law.

Opponents of the political dynasty law argue that the term "political dynasty" has not been properly defined and there is no enabling law to back it.

A party-list group, Alamod (Alyansa ng Dynastiya Abolyo), is considering filing a case against unmeritorious candidates it believes are guilty of perpetuating political dynasties.

The group aims to detail the ornamental role of Koko Pimentel, Mar Roxas' nominee and Bongbong Marcos' Aquino-III of the Genuine Opposition and former Aquino-Cojuangco of the administration's Team Unity.

Cayetano has a stake, too, already in the unenviable Aquino is the nephew of Sonia Cayetano.

Ting Pimentel also lashed out at her family's detractors for not including President Macapagal-Arroyo and her own family in the dynasty issue.

"Why are they quoting Mahatma and the daily political gesture of President Arroyo? One of her sons [Juan Miguel] is already a congressman, her other son [Dodoi] I will not be a Congress man in fatal even if he is not from the area, and her brother-in-law [Iggy] is also a member of Congress. Why is all this being ignored?" she said.

Pimentel, an educator, argued her point using the concept of "contemporary morality"—that what was shocked as immoral before is no longer considered "immoral" at present.

Angara: Go easy on CPP-NPA terror tag

TACLOBAN CITY—SELECTION Sen. Edgardo Angara yesterday said the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army, could not be considered terrorist organizations in the country unless there was a court declaration.

Speaking to reporters during a campaign sortie of Team Unity here, Angara said Defense Undersecretary Ricardo Blancaflor was merely giving his own view regarding the recently signed Human Security Act, subversion known as the anti-Terrorist Law, when he spoke of the possibility of the communist organization being declared as such.

"The way I read the pronouncement of Blancaflor, he was asked if the CPP-NPA could be considered a terrorist organization. That requires a declaration from the courts. It is not automatic," he said.

The US state department has identified the CPP and NPA as a terrorist organization in its annual report on the patterns of international terrorism.

But Angara stressed that it was not automatic on the part of the Philippine government to follow suit.

Blancaflor, the director of the country's antiterrorism task force, had said that CPP-NPA guerrillas could be declared terrorists unless they stopped extorting to "terrorize" acts and started coming down from the hills.

He said the CPP-NPA had committed acts that fell under the definition of terrorism under the Anti-Terror Law that will take effect on July 14, or two months after the May elections.

The CPP was established in December 1968 and the NPA about three months later.

Blancaflor said several other groups, such as the Abu Sayyaf, could be classified as terrorist after the law takes effect.

Angara said total development, not war, was the best antidote to insurgency.

Citing Bohol as an example, Angara said the government's total support had completely wiped out insurgency in the province.

Cynthia D. Balana

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OPINION

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The fugitive

EDITORIAL

IN THE 2001 ELECTIONS, THE NEWLY INSTALLED Arroyo administration sought to consolidate the gains of Edsa II by—among other means—campaigning for a sweep of the Senate race. The People Power Coalition (another temporary alliance, in the Philippine tradition of ad hoc electoral coalitions) pulled out all the stops to try to produce a 13-0 result. (A 13th seat was at stake, because Sen. Teofisto Guingona had been appointed Vice President.)

The PPC also allied itself with the most popular and best organized party-list organization at that time. As the latest SWS survey shows, those distinctions still hold true for Bayan Muna, but what a difference a legitimacy crisis makes.

Six years ago, the Arroyo administration welcomed Bayan Muna's lead nominee, Satur Ocampo, to its swirling de oxygen. Today the Arroyo administration, still in the throes of a crisis of legitimacy it likes to pretend has already been resolved, is maneuvering to put Ocampo behind bars.

Ocampo, a former communist rebel who has become the face of the legal, militant opposition, may surface today to file a petition with the Supreme Court. But we are certain that, even if he successfully exculpates himself from the new charge filed against him, more charges lie in wait for him and his colleagues in leftist party-list groups.

First things first. Reports of Ocampo's involvement in the paroxysm of violence that rent the communist insurgency in the 1980s continue to circulate, some of them from former victims of the bloody purges. These are concerns Ocampo must answer, and answer convincingly.

But—the second point—the charge filed against him, Commander Parry of the Philippine Scouter Arnie Teves and scores of others, for alleged involvement in the mass murders of communist insurgents in Inopacan town, in Leyte, in 1985, is fatally defective. It is a charge rushed to its existence or [wrong] designed to fail, for a basic reason: Ocampo was in jail when the alleged mass murder took place. Not even the injudicious remarks of Justice Secretary Real Gonzales, that main murder can be plotted from inside a jail cell, can obscure the main basis of the charge: that a utensil now his in Inopacan at the time of the purge. Unless Ocampo has the gift of bilocation, the charge—accepted by a judge who did not read or chose to ignore the actual evidence—is essentially baseless.

Third: The charge and the arrest warrant against Ocampo did not materialize in a vacuum. Bayan Muna and associated party-list groups have suffered systematic harassment especially in the last two years. Hundreds of their members have been assassinated; they have been the targets of "saturation drives," especially those then led by the President's favorite general, Jovito Palparan, the chief of staff of the Armed Forces has launched "civil-military operations" in certain urban poor areas in Metro Manila to prevent leftist party-list groups from campaigning, and so on and so forth.

It is true that—and here is the fourth point—the congressional representatives of Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Gabriela have not shied from using their pork barrel funds (something we have taken them to task for). But allegations from government officials and military officers that they have used these government funds to finance anti-government activities, or even to finance the communist insurgency, are unproven and unsubstantiated. This misuse of funds, if true, is treason of the highest order, but professional prosecutors like National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales do not even offer any proof, like Goebbels, they put their faith in the repetition of lies and half-truths. A fatally flawed case like the Inopacan massacre does not increase public confidence but undermines it.

Lastly: The Ocampo case is, at bottom, a policy issue. Once the Arroyo administration, which embraced Bayan Muna in 2001 and again [although both sides will deny it] in 2004, came believe that the only way to defeat the insurgency is through military means? The idea behind the old policy was to invite former insurgents to unite the armed struggle for the parliamentary one.

We thought that policy worked, despite many shortcomings. So did the Arroyo administration—at least until the President's legitimacy crisis forced her to trade longterm peace for short-term survival.

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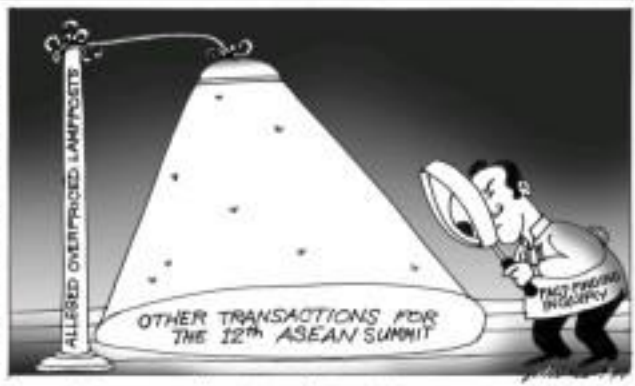

Napocor cheating electricity consumers

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THE NATIONAL POWER CORP. IS CHARGING electricity consumers by not reducing power rates despite the strengthening of the peso and the lowering of fuel prices. Besides, it is computing automatically fuel, gasoline, diesel and LPG prices with each drop in the prices of crude oil and the rise in the peso exchange rate; why can't Napocor do the same with electricity rates? With each gain of the peso, Napocor says we do not have enough money to pay our creditors. And with each drop in the price of crude, Napocor says we do not feel costs. (Some Napocor power plants are bicolor diesel.) In the case of generating electricity, guess down. Therefore, the price of electricity for the consumers should go up, down. So why isn't this happening even though the price of fuel has been cut for the many times?

Because Napocor is cheating. How?

During the time of the Energy Regulatory Board, power rates were automatically adjusted to reflect the foreign exchange rates as well as the cost of raw materials used to power generation. When the peso depreciated in value against the dollar, electricity rates instantly went up. But when the peso appreciated, power rates went down. The ERB's automatic power adjustment system allowed power rates to go up or down depending on the current market prices, without need of public hearings. It was fair to consumers because they were billed according to market prices. And any gain in the peso-dollar exchange rate was immediately translated from the amounts charged to consumers.

When the Energy Regulatory Commission replaced the ERB, the setup was changed. Napocor now has to apply for any rate adjustment, and hearings have to be held by the ERC to determine if the adjustment is justified. That is, if Napocor applies for it. If Napocor does not, there can be no hearings, much less reduction in the rates.

Napocor is cheating consumers by simply not applying for rate reductions or valuing the basis to apply. With every day that the adjustment is delayed, Napocor takes in millions of pesos in profits it does not deserve. With the appreciating peso, our electricity rates, like the fuel prices, should have been regularly reduced since September 2000 when the peso started to recover. So how come we do not feel the peso gains through reduced power rates? How come we are still being billed for dollar-peso rates based on the high peso-dollar exchange rate?

Because Napocor, instead of applying for a rate reduction, is claiming the windfall in exchange rates as profit. This windfall should go back to the consumers, but Napocor is pocketing it all in net profits.

Napocor reported a net income of almost P99 billion in 2000 due to hefty foreign exchange gains. In 2001, it reported a have gain of P65 billion.

In the first place, the profit reported from have gains is not real but merely additional profit; it is not a result of better fiscal management. The gains do not rightfully belong to Napocor but to the Philippine consumers of electricity.

And any reduction in the price of raw materials for power generation should normally result in the reduction of power rates.

Because of the delay in rate adjustments, consumers get only a minuscule cut of about 31 centavos per kilowatt hour. The reduction should have been P2.1490, or P600 based on a 200-kilowatt monthly electricity consumption.

The ERC has urged Napocor to file rates application for incremental currency exchange rate adjustments (Icera). This should give consumers a rate cut of P2.1490 to reflect the P99 billion net income it claims.

ERC Chair Rodolfo Albano said Napocor's deferment of the accounting of Icera gains results against the interest of Filipino consumers who have been shortchanged and have to wait longer for rate cuts.

Napocor president Cyril del Callar is glossing over Napocor's P99 billion net profit, but this is how the blood, sweat and tears of the overseas Filipino workers passing through the economy and the peso-dollar exchange rate. The money should go back to the consumers, not to Napocor.

Electricity distribution firms like Meralco and the electric cooperatives are being blamed for the delay in the reimbursements. What many do not know is that distribution firms and cooperatives are merely collection utilities and have no authority to tell Napocor to adjust its rates. Also, the distribution firms account automatically (computerized for easy use) they have already implemented. It usually takes them 90 months to be reimbursed by Napocor.

Now you see why Napocor refuses to reduce or privatize the same firm. Pitch huge taxes gains to your crony, gains that are not rightfully belong to Napocor but to the Filipino people, who can stop the Napocor media from using every trick to prevent the privatization of the power firm?

But the ERC should not wait for Napocor to move. It should put a stop to the situation being done to eliminate consumers—by setting up an automatic rate adjustment mechanism. Like the old one. Without any need for Napocor to initiate the application for rate reduction.

* * *

Businessmen are having a difficult time getting senatorial candidates to participate in its public debates on election issues. Administration candidates are eager to join the debates but opposition candidates are not.

Ironically, if you are behind in the opinion polls, as Sen. Tessie Aquino-Oreta is now, you will jump at every chance of public exposure. But if you are already ahead like the opposition candidates, why will you participate in the debate? You have nothing to gain and everything to lose in such an event. How many know what surprise the other side will spring on you.

On the other hand, the losing candidates have nothing to lose and everything to gain in such debates.

Murder most foul

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

LET ME BE CLEAR: I PERSONALLY WELCOME the arrest of the "killing fields," or commission purges, being prosecuted and presided over by the Inquirer's own Isagani Yambot. I've held that position from the very beginning. Some of my friends are either survivors of those purges or the kin of the dead, and I am an ardent supporter of their quest for justice. We can indeed no longer afford to bind ourselves to those killings, or claim them as our own, for the betterment of the interests of the enemy and which probably do the community a service, than we can to the killings that have been happening splendidly in our midst over the last several years.

I have said that, I presume correctly, repeatedly the arrest of Satur Ocampo. That is an abomination that has no right to exist in a country pretending to be a democracy. Indeed, in a country pretending to have elections.

What's wrong with it—everything.

As the arrest warrant comes at a time when the international community has been loudly condemning the killings in the Philippines. Philip Alston and the Mole Commission have directly attributed those killings to military elements—the Mole Commission has especially named Jovito Palparan. They have further noted the name of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's culpability in them.

The arrest warrant against Ocampo is clearly an attempt by the government to hijack the public's attention away from it. While at the same time selling that identical idea, which it has maintained throughout the Alston and Mole investigations, that it's the NPA and not the military that is responsible for the killings, presumably in continuation of the purges. Who they or not they are responsible for is the central question. Ocampo's case is part of turning it allows the government to press this point, or at least—since it cannot seriously expect to persuade cynical public to buy it—to muddle the issue and distract from it, getting out of the glare of opprobrium over the killings.

Well, it won't. The persons and their kins won't get off so easily with the murder of journalists and political activists. The order of priority is clear enough. First, prosecute them. then, and only then, the authors of the communist purges. The reason for that is simple. It is not merely that the most haggling tools of the killings of journalists and political activists today—the NPA "killing fields" look like little tongue-pimpled marbles; it is also that we are years in governance, and with the DOJ in particular, through our nose. We have a right to demand justice from it, to see it done, not have a right to demand not to be murdered by it.

But more than that, its substance sucks.

Certainly, it does not help the government's case that Ocampo was in jail at the time the "killing fields" in Leyte took place. The NPA and even his supporters who accuse Ocampo have pinned the killings even while he was in jail. I'll leave them to debate that point, though the quality of the military's utterances against its erstwhile bogeyman isn't to encourage risk. My own point is this:

If Ocampo is guilty of the crime by command responsibility, and no arrest warrant may be issued against him for it, why isn't no arrest warrant warrant against GMA for precisely the same reason? If Ocampo's case, you still have to prove that he was a leader of the communist movement and exercised his power at all times. In GMA's case, well, you do have to prove as well—or the issue—that she is the president, but you can be absolutely certain, since she has left no doubts about it, that she has wielded the powers of the president at all times.

Did she know about the killings? Yes. Was she in a position to stop the killings? Yes. Did she stop the killings? No. Guilty by virtue of command responsibility.

Why in hell is there an arrest warrant for Ocampo and none for GMA?

Or for that matter, against Justice Dolpinario? The guy's never had his murderous intent against the enemy, combatant and non-combatant alike, secret. In fact, he boasted about it telling civilians early on long if they happened to be in the line of fire. He has been named as a definite culprit by the Mole Commission. You want to arrest Ocampo for mass murder and not him?

The selective perception is breathtaking. "Impunity" is the word the Inquirer's Wilfrido Villacorta used to describe the case with which the government's official butchers butcher journalists and political activists. It is the word Alston and the UN government have used as well to condemn the killings. Well, it's not just that this country's official butchers are able to murder with impunity. It's also that they are able to ascribe their crimes to others with impunity.

But what truly galls about all this is that it is being done in the middle of the electoral campaign. The arrest warrant against Ocampo and the invasion of suburbs and slums were by the military's own admission timed to coincide with the campaign. The arrest warrant against Ocampo sends the message that these elections are about democracy vs. communism, and the choice of democracy is posed by people like him. In fact, the opposition is decided. These elections are about legitimate vs. illegitimate rule and the threat to democracy is posed by the cheaters. There is no bigger crime against elections than stealing the vote. There is no bigger threat to democracy than stealing the vote in the bud. That is murder most foul.

And has the leader not Ocampo did it. GMA did.

Churchmen and politics (Part 2)

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

Should the clergy limit themselves to teaching general moral ideas, or may they advocate specific political actions?

FOR ME, THE SIMPLEST KNOWN THE QUESTION is whether a member of the clergy, particularly one who runs a parish or a diocese, should run for public office. Canon Law, Canon 285, 3 provides in time that there is no constitutional obstacle for a cleric running for office. As to the obstacle arising from Canon Law prescription, it is not in an insurmountable. What remains, therefore, is a question of propriety for the cleric. The view of this is that combining political office and religious ministry can create Church-State relations and unnecessary unity. I would therefore follow the principle that one must choose between being both a church minister or a public official. Consequently, the two can be both religiously and politically independent.

Another important question touches on the substance of preaching by the clergy and religious. By preaching I do not simply refer to sermons delivered in the pulpit. It includes any public or semi-public pronouncements.

Should the clergy and churches limit themselves to teaching general moral ideas, or may they advocate specific political actions? Certainly no one will deny the clergy the right to preach about morality. That is their task and they would be remiss in their duties if they habitually avoid moral issues. Thus, no one should deny them the right to discuss politically whether abortion is moral or immoral, or that the death penalty is wrong, or that the poor, or that employers should or should not pay workers a living wage, or that homosexual acts are or are not sinful, or that same-sex or sex-set morally wrong. This is all part of ordinary religious preaching.

What is more important, however, when one of general moral teachings, specific public positions are addressed—such as impeachment, Charter change, or even the closure of private broadcasting stations. Of course, there are specific conclusions that flow naturally from general principles. For instance, if a priest believes that commercial service can be provided to those in the privacy of their bedrooms no one would have the right to punish the priest, the natural conclusion will be that they should not be criminalized. But specific practical conclusions do not always come out naturally. The fact that an act is clearly sinful does not entail in any way conclusion that it should be penalized. It is wrong, our priests would be more crowded than they already are.

Why is it that people sometimes do not want their religious leaders to tell them what specific actions they should take or what political positions they should take? I believe that it is all part and parcel of being a citizen of a democracy. "I have my own mind. Don't touch me. Let me decide my own conscience!" That is a perfectly legitimate attitude. To avoid alienating people who have such an attitude, a cleric must carefully and intelligently present his positions. His approval conclusions are presented as the product of one's own study and are presented for people to agree or disagree with, then no one should feel insulted or offended.

Another objection to specific pronouncements by clerics is that their competence and their access is needed here for drawing conclusions are limited. Rarely is their superior related to economics, law, sociology or politics, etc. But specific conclusions about the morality of economic or political decisions can depend very much on the dynamics and nuances of those specialized fields. If the cleric has competence in those fields, then his authority can be more persuasive. But it is still good to remember that the people whose souls he is to shepherd are not his property. He is there for the flock of people, e.g., lawmakers, to see if ways have the needed expertise on what they may be talking about. Some lawmakers really will through their lost. But this is no reason for a cleric to be reckless.

While a cleric, however, should not be reckless in his statements, neither should he be inordinately pusillanimous. There are political and economic decisions that have great moral significance. Those should be heard, with prudence, pastoral sensitivity and knowledge of conflict. Risky as it is of the apostolic vicariate.

Critics do make mistakes, not of unvirtuous perhaps, or through excess of zeal or even for their foolish reasons. But in my own opinion, members and all, a courageous band of clerics and churchmen is much more than harm. The courage of the churches in the Philippines has made significant contributions to improving our economic and political life.

Sincerity

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Carlos Isagani T. Zarate

"TO SERVE THE PEOPLE." THIS IS PROMISED the most worn-out catchphrase coming from candidates—neophytes and veterans, administration and opposition—as they try, with great effort, to make people believe their reason for spending millions of pesos just to be elected. True or not, we cannot judge a candidate's worth on the basis of what we see in very expensive ads (seen flooding the TV screens) or in posters and other campaign materials (littering the streets).

But I know one person who seriously lived out this commitment all through his life, without much fanfare. He was never a candidate for a position position. He "served the people" and served them well. And, probably, it was because of his unpretentious manner that he was never killed.

Romeo "Ka Bong" Bacudio, 53, was buried last Friday in Bagac in the Bataan del Sur. The night before, a calibang Mo Ingat was held in his home by members of progressive groups in the Bataan region.

Ka Bong was killed March 2 by two hooded assailants on board a motorcycle, who shot him in front of his neighborhood sari-sari convenience store, on a street in Dapa City. Apparently, to make sure they would be able to kill him, the assailants fired four bullets into his head, chest, shoulder and abdomen.

At the time of his death, Ka Bong was the provincial coordinator of the progressive party-list group Anakpawis in Bataan del Sur. He became the latest victim in the political killings in Southern Mindanao since 2001.

When Pres. Philip Aquino, the 5th quarter top partisan on extrajudicial killings went to Davao City last Feb. 18, Ka Bong was among those who hoisted slogan on their statements and interviews that the government stopped to ignore their testimonies. He probably had no inkling that in helping the survivors of the Feb. 6, 2001 Bataan massacre in Mamasapano, Davao del Sur, he himself would become a victim of another outbreak killing.

But, Bacudio was not a communist rebel. The men on viewing on his life would have stopped him from serving the farmers' causes in Bataan del Sur, which until now is still dominated by big landlords. Indeed, Ka Bong's whole life was devoted to his causes. He started as a student activist at the Holy Cross of Davao College during the so-called First Quarter Storm in the '70s. At the height of the Marcos dictatorship, he became a prominent student leader and served as secretary general of the National Union of Students of the Philippines (Nasuphil), a pro-left group affiliated with the Kilusang Magbubuklod ng Pilipinas.

To his colleagues, Ka Bong's death is the executive proof that Oplan Bayanihan is increasingly used as "counter-insurgency" tool to eliminate legal organizations and individuals perceived to be "enemies of the state." Despite the findings of Bikom, the Inter-Commission and, lately of the CHR Inter-Agency Committee, the military is not willing to unify not going to lift a finger to stop the political killings, on the contrary it has demonstrated to use a "wars of almost total denial" regarding the matter.

So far, the only concrete government response to the wave of killings came not from the executive department but from the Supreme Court, which has designated special courts to try cases involving the summary killings of activists, journalists, lawyers and human rights workers.

The special courts, though, were created in light of—does whether these special courts would serve as deterrents to the killings. Indeed, unless the Aquino administration comes a direct hand and adopts credible measures to prevent further killings, the special courts will remain as mere tools for the perpetrators, this recent wave of the high court will just be an exercise in futility.

Questions to the Aquino administration mount as its effort to combat the problem[1] is more to mentioned that the prosecution of cases on extrajudicial killings depends largely on testimonies of witnesses who are themselves in danger of being killed if they testify against the perpetrators. Is the witness' conscience are presented as the product of one's own study and are presented for people to agree or disagree with, then no one should feel insulted or offended.

Another objection to specific pronouncements by clerics is that their competence and their access is needed here for drawing conclusions are limited. Rarely is their superior related to economics, law, sociology or politics, etc. But specific conclusions about the morality of economic or political decisions can depend very much on the dynamics and nuances of those specialized fields. If the cleric has competence in those fields, then his authority can be more persuasive. But it is still good to remember that the people whose souls he is to shepherd are not his property. He is there for the flock of people, e.g., lawmakers, to see if ways have the needed expertise on what they may be talking about. Some lawmakers really will through their lost. But this is no reason for a cleric to be reckless.

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Price of conviction

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

THROUGHOUT HISTORY LEGISLATURES HAVE been jealously protective of the independence of their members. Parliaments and congresses have generally been quick to resist and condemn undue power—and those who attempted that power were themselves punished by the members for their attempts against them and their members on the principle that "when the guns speak, the law falls silent." The principle includes lawmakers whose only sanction, more often than not, is making noise.

The most famous and unsavory tale about the commons involves King Charles I of England who, supported Parliament when he tried to dissolve it, to impeach, Members of Parliament (MPs) physically pushed down the Speaker of the House as he was trying to leave the chamber, as they also locked Sergeant-at-Arms's door to minimize their detour, and the king retaliated by locking up some MPs.

In 1641, criticized that Parliament was pointed to impeach his Queen, Charles I decided to arrest five members of the House of Commons. The king barged into the Commons with an armed guard, but the MPs he wanted to apprehend had fled, scandalized, the king left London. Parliamentarians raised an army. By 1642, the king had raised his banner, and the English Civil War became inevitable. It ended with Charles' execution and Parliament's partial victory which ushered in the first century of Oliver Cromwell.

When President Marcos faced Congress might challenge his power, he declared martial law, but the legislature building seized by soldiers and the lawyers paralyzed, the latter using the ratification rule over contempt to consolidate his rule.

During the effort to impeach then Chief Justice Hilario Davide, there was the real possibility that the Supreme Court might hand down a restraining order on the House. This could have led to a situation where the executive would have to order the police to disperse the House. Based with the experience of 1986, this would have led to unacceptable act of unnecessarily, unbalanced an impeachment, contemporaneous speech that successfully handled all a constitutional crisis.

In 1986 and 2001, the executive—without the approval of legislative action—used extra-legal means to overthrow the government. In both instances, members of Congress expressed unease with such orders, though generally focused to public opinion because evidence had left the scene.

In 2001, there was an attempt to arrest House members. The Speaker intervened and offered assistance to the congressmen in danger of arrest, except in the case of Rep. Crispin Beltran, who was placed under hospital arrest and remains in detention to this day, the overall effect of the events was to reinforce the case against them collapsed in court. The Commission grants legislators immunity from arrest only when Congress is in session, and the crimes that carry a penalty of six years' imprisonment or less, also with the exception of rebellion, including the suppression with sanctuary within the House's premises. The reason was basic. Whatever the criticisms against him, the Speaker has shown a consistent appreciation of the limits that Congress, as an institution, has to make use in the face of the police power wielded against it.

Sec. 4b, Chapter 10 of the Administrative Code of the Philippines states, "All public officers and employees of the government, including every member of the armed forces, shall take an oath or affirmation to uphold and defend the Constitution, that he will bear true faith and allegiance to it, obey the laws, legal orders and decrees promulgated by the duly constituted authorities, faithfully discharge to the best of his ability the duties of the office or position upon which he is about to enter, and that he voluntarily assumes the obligation imposed by his oath of office, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion..."

We forget that whenever our opinions may be about the ideological positions of certain politicians online, they have taken an oath at public offices. It is an oath that the vast majority of the elected never have taken, and never will take. Since the government loves to harp on the "presumption of regularity" to the extent it makes the want to scream, then it is also bound to respect the status when it comes to the oaths of office that public officials take.

But the case of Rep. Lucy Torres-Gomez, they say has nothing to do with his conduct as a legislator; they accuse him of corruption in their members. Dominguez's predecessor, of course, broke the charges of corruption and of a violation of a provision of the constitution by a lawmaker from being charged with newly discovered crimes.

I believe that the charges are as gross, and their implications as serious for the institution of Congress as they are in our court or another forum cancelled with, that he must face them squarely and under whatever circumstances, fair or not, then a trial has play out.

To do otherwise is as to permit the blocking of the due process because those accused will always find work within the political system, and those who pursue, armed struggle, and the more heated that line becomes, the greater the path to his followers who are united with the very same weapons for self-preservation.

The only reason to be political have the nerve to release the Bill of Rights and begin into Congress' house under the pretense of serving a measure of arrest is that Congress is the longest to tantamount—and rightly so—to the Constitution's spirit out of its own. Thus—and a reality neither Duterte nor his supporters are prepared to admit—if the government is battered by its human rights record, as is the OPPARK-MOE. The message of Congress' arrest of Rep. Crispin Beltran is beyond question; in which case, he must adopt the strategy of Fidel Castro, and face his accusers to be duck and say "I firmly will absolve me."

Davide at UN

FORMER SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE HILARIO DAVIDE JR. is now our Permanent Representative to the New York-based United Nations. He presented his credentials last week as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

My spy in New York reports that Davide is soon to be named one of the vice presidents of the Economic and Social Council (Ecosoc). An official announcement from the UN is due either in forthcoming. That should put to rest all the talk and media speculation implying that we would lose his presence from the country. Indeed, I got a second letter from Baja. Our readers will recall that in his first letter, Baja declared: "Sa Ayaw Lang" I am not one of those officials wanting to step out ... " In his second letter, Baja does a similar song saying "I supported the President and the Secretary of Foreign Affairs for a short secession of my term of their ... for considerations of national interest." He was apparently referring to the vice-presidency of the former.

Which is why the news that Davide—the consolidator in Manila were teeming with members of Congress for a resolution to keep him in his post. If media reports were accurate, they succeeded in getting 68 signatures on that resolution, although one can never be too sure about signatures. The more people who sought the intervention of the Honorable Constitutional Commission of the Philippines Constitution, the more likely it was to order the President on Baja's request to step out. These appeals to Congress and to a Prince of the Church represented a double-barreled attempt aimed at persuading the executive branch to grant his wish for an extension. In my society, when, among said strange, contradictory, and unpersuasive persuasive rhetoric which used to intercede for public officials seeking a promotion, a new assignment or a convenient easy in an old post. This is part of the culture of the land. What makes the Baja case different is that here the individual concerned is proudly proclaiming that "I am not one of those officials wanting to step out" while his supporters work on the opposite objective.

The decision moment made a good choice turning the details, highly-respected former chief justice as the country's representative at the UN.

Before technology becomes fifteen-thousand for making the entire city only time to the date of the antediluvian primitives viewed as keep Baja as the UN.

* * *

As of this writing, the former Bureau of the Philippines is ruled by Bilateralism. The Aubry ambassador is Lt. Gen. Romeo Tolentino, the chief of staff of the Armed Forces. Ironically, and the Navy is led by Rear Adm. Jonathan Torrevillas. All three come from the island of Luzon (no Boni Bilateral provinces. They are not related to one another. Along with the AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., all belong to PMA class 1974.

* * *

More news for senior citizens.

In the last column, I mentioned that Malcolm Bing, the largest distributor of medicines nationwide, had agreed to honor the 20 percent discount granted to senior citizens during recently declared five-day suspension of price increases. Of course only for cash payments. Last week, I was able to confirm this arrangement when I used my credit card for purchases in the discounting branch of Mercury. Several of my friends also mentioned that they were able to use their credit cards in both the 20-percent discount branch.

Fernando Poe Jr. Memorial School in the Philippine Air Force Flying School was just too happy. The two-year branch in Aruba Alabang still refused to give him a 20-percent discount on a purchase paid through credit card. I advised him to ask for the manager of the branch because it was possible that the rules governing the consumers were not aware of the new administration order. He got given a hard time anyway, or were simply being reckless.

If any of our senior citizens still have similar problems in Mercury or any drugstore, Trade Secretary Ramon Ramon has ordered us to immediately report them to the DTI Direct Call Center (1-384). Just call 1-384 and tell the center the name of the establishment and that of its manager. Let the 1-year-old Mercury Drug, or Commander Drug or Gotamedicine Drug or any other drugstore would still refuse to honor your senior card with the 20-percent discount, they'll 35-36 and violators.

Dear again, we wish to thank Vice President Sole de Castro and his people, particularly his chief of staff Annie Ambrosio, for sorting out this problem and making sure that the provisions of the law, the Expanded Senior Citizens' Act, are implemented properly and enforced.

* * *

His another subject also of interest to senior citizens. Last week, I had a long conversation with Secretary Sevilla and we discussed problems concerning the seniors' 20-percent discount in food items, particularly in restaurants.

Problems, as I mentioned, there is no problem to answer for opposing the 20-percent senior citizens' discount when the bill is presented to them.

Some restaurants would like to cut the cost of the food and beverages and apply the 20-percent discount to this amount. Others would total the cost of the food and beverages plus the VAT, other charges and service charges, and then apply the 20-percent discount to this higher figure.

A. Example of the first method:
Food: P600
Beverage: P100
Total: P700
Less: 20% discount: P140
Total: P560
Add: 12% VAT: P67
and service charge: P70
Total check: P697

B. Example of the second method:
Food: P600
Beverage: P100
12% VAT: P84
Service charge: P70
Total: P1,386
Less: 20% discount: P277
Total check: P1109

The second method "B" is the correct computation. It also gives the senior citizen a higher discount. Again, there should be no difficulties in just if we are to be fair to each other. So any complaints, call 711-10-20.

Thank you, Secretary Sevilla, for your concern and assistance.

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CEBU PACIFIC

Comelec discriminating against gays, lesbians

LETTERS

THE DISMISSAL OF ANG LADLAD PETITION for party-list accreditation and the decision classifying Danny Bulaong as a nuisance candidate for the Senate spur human rights advocates, local and international, many reasons to keep their eyes wide open.

We seem to have in the Commission on Elections a man (and commissioners, too) who discriminates against lesbians and gays. After the announcement of Ang Ladlad's and Bulaong's disqualification, Abalos said that gays, lesbians and dreadlocks cannot sit in Congress. Why only lump gays and lesbians with dreadlocks, in the first place?

We have countless members of society who are gay and not very outspoken in their respective fields of endeavors. They can make a difference in our country. Perhaps, more than the incumbent and some wannabes (a number of whom are undeniably into heavy drinking and drugs and "worshiping" their sex. Why would Abalos now deny say they are not fit to serve the people as legislators?

Why is the Comelec afraid of gay legislators? Second-guessing their sexual orientation has nothing to do with a man's leadership abilities or a man's desire to serve his/her nation.

There seems to be a new strain of "racism" developing in the Comelec. It is apparently discriminating against a group of individuals who has a right to be represented in Congress, just as any other sectors, and whose members have the ability to serve the country well. We have gay organizations as any group, and simply because they are sexually non-conformists.

Shame, shame, shame. The Comelec should not ruin the country's chances of progress with its dishonorable and fatal acts of discrimination.

—SEVILLEJO,
10 Molubolub St.,
Teachers' Village, Quezon City

Perplexed and perplexing observations

FROM THE VERY START OF THE CAMPAIGN, Team Unity/Team Gibbs strategy has been to make the forthcoming midterm elections a proxy war between President Joseph Estrada and Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. The tapings of the administration were released and henceforth underwent all manner of black propaganda against the Estrada family. Pandesal, Erap wins, and perhaps will always be, the most convenient scapegoat for the administration's numerous failures.

The reason President Erap demanded that Lei Estrada and Jinggoy step down running for the Senate was to debunk claims that this battle is between him and GMA, even if tarpons for both of us were family members candidates.

No matter how hard the administration TV host wrinkle and the major dailies try to keep on the angle that the Genuine Opposition (GO) is fully organized and financing, our candidates' actual encounters with the public during our sincere walks and contacts say otherwise. I have been candid in admitting that we are hampered by funding problems, something the administration candidates do not have to contend with. Our candidates have been doing their own hand-raising as well, which in turn we give them ample time to do as on their own.

Last-minute pushpoint as to who our real target, whose our candidacies are so acutely motivated by the people, never was been discussed in your paper and in Armando Doronila's vaguely-colorful in their comment let this?

Nevertheless, 13 senatorial candidates of GO's the minority unity with the Lakas camp showing a probable 6-0 ratio in our favor. The people's response renews our commitment to campaign even harder. We believe they look upon us as their ally. Thus, however disappointed the people are with administration ruling in, this is the same which the mistral will produce a clean victory.

—JUANCHO,
Interim campaign manager,
Genuine Opposition (GO),
409 Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City

Baja denies going to cardinal for extension

IN REFERENCE TO RAMON SEBULANI'S column dated Feb. 26, allow me to correct his allegations:

First, I did not write a letter to or seek the Emeritus Cardinal Rosales to request a short extension of my term of duty.

Second, I requested the President and the foreign secretary for a short extension of my term of duty not because of the "political pulse in the air" or to appear abroad" but for considerations of national interest. I was elected unanimously as vice president of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (Ecosoc) by my peers who expected me to fulfill my duties. I felt obligated to them for giving me all the opportunity to substantially fulfill my mandate in the short time allowed by the Department of Foreign Affairs. I have also requested the UN and the Asian Group to consider the possibility that the Philippines may continue to be part of the Ecosoc bureau (prestigious UN body) despite the end of my term of duty.

Third, I have no doubt that I left the "image while the audience would appreciate." What is most satisfying to me is that the loudest cheers for my achievements came from the poorest.

Finally, I believe I left the high-level ground in this unfortunate saga and here are the steps for continued success of the Philippines in multilateral diplomacy with the "audience still applauding." After this letter, I will no longer engage in speculative comments and my critics before me will adhere my conservative orientation.

—LUCIO C. BAJA JR.

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ERC tolerating unlawful charges vs consumers?

ON NOV. 30, 2006, MERALCO DISCONNECTED our electric service because of our failure to pay a bill deposit pursuant to Article 28 of the Magna Carta for Residential Electricity Consumers, which was promulgated on June 17, 2004, and Sec. 22 of the Energy Regulatory Board's Resolution No. 93-23 dated Aug. 3, 1993, both of which state: "A bill deposit from all residential and non-residential customers or guarantee payment of bills shall be required of new and/or additional service."

Getting nowhere in my repeated pleas for reconnection, I sought the help of the Energy Regulatory Commission (formerly the Energy Regulatory Board) enforcing that our electric service be put back in force (having been severed on Jan. 7, 2004) and that no additional service was requested, provided new since.

The ERC, in its letter of Dec. 5, 2006, reminded Meralco that the Magna Carta for Residential Electricity Consumers and ERB Resolution No. 93-23 were already repealed by the Distribution Service and Open Access Rules (DSOAR). "In any case, we would like to be clarified why you are still imposing a meter deposit," the ERC asked Meralco.

It appears that failing to receive Meralco's response, the ERC did not pursue the matter anymore, thus leaving us without electric connection until your irresistible, it makes me think that the ERC may also be one of the government's regulatory bodies "captured by big business." (Inquirer, 2/14/07) Letter-writer that it is likely that many electric consumers were already disadvantaged by this Meralco imposition which could very well be unlawful.

—FERDINAND S. BAGUIO JR.,
Regency Townhouse, 25 Bayan St.,
Sarabeville Subdivision II,
Loyola Heights, Quezon City

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Across the NATION

PNP watching 7 Cagayan towns

TUGUEGARAO CITY—POLICE ARE MONITORING political developments in seven towns in Cagayan in the run-up to the May 14 elections due to past incidents of poll-related violence.

The towns of Allacapan, Lasam, Buguey, Camalaniugan, Iguig, Santa Ana and Enrile are in the watch list, Cagayan police director Senior Supt. Pedro Dasalla said.

He said Allacapan was included because of the murder of Mayor Nathaniel Ortiz in the town in September last year.

He said there were assassination attempts on local officials in Lasam and Camalaniugan, while in some political rivalries had been noted in Enrile and Buguey.

Dasalla retained violent incidents were reported in Iguig and Santa Ana in previous years, he said.

He said police were also checking reports that Nora Privado's camp admin were collecting per-unit-in-campaign fees from prospective candidates.

Some politicians were asking for police escorts as protection from their constituents which is why they campaign in rebel-controlled areas, he said.

The Commission on Elections will decide on the requests, he said.

Supalilat said reports on the existence of a private armed group in Sta. Ana town were also being checked, after a group of armed men in Lagum-an was linked to an official there.

He said at least 20 firearms were confiscated from police checkpoints set up in the province during the election period.

Abra

In Bangued, Abra, Gov. Vicente Valera said he did not want the the police's Task Force Abra to be abolished but wanted its presidence and other policemen, who are favoring local politicians, replaced and removed from the province.

Valera said he appealed to the Comelec to consider replacing these policemen for their alleged failure to dismantle private armed groups maintained by local politicians.

"I did not ask for the (Task Force) Abra's abolition, but for the replacement of police officers who are favoring other politicians," Valera said reporters here on Friday.

He said the task force commander, Chief Supt. Eugene Martin, and his men were not doing their job when they failed to identify and dismantle armed groups of three politicians.

Valera cited the case of Lagayan Mayor Cecilia Luna, whom, he said, maintains a private army supposedly to protect her from assassins to kill her and members of her family.

"We always wanted to know the identities of these private armed groups. Why don't we, or they identify who these people are so that the public will know? They should be identified," he said.

Luna, however, denied the government's claims.

"It is not true. I do not (maintain an) armed group but my relatives are the ones protecting me," Luna told the reporters in Kalinga-Apayao and Mayor Lucresencia Duplito and Vice Mayor Lucresencia Duplito of Northern Luzon.

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MORES

Oil retrieval from Solar I tanker in Guimaras starts

By Carla P. Gomez
Inquirer Visayas

BAGUIO CITY—SALVAGE OPERATIONS to retrieve over a million liters of diesel fuel from the 187 ft. barge, which sunk off Guimaras seven months ago, began yesterday.

Environment officials handed the international salvage team Alfred Shield to ensure crew compliance with environmental precautions required by the Philippine government.

The Alfred Shield, owned by an Indian firm specializing in deep-water operations, docked in the Batuled Real Estate Development Corp. (Bredeco) port here Saturday night and sailed toward the site yesterday morning.

The Philippine Coast Guard will bar vessels from entering the one-kilometer radius around the area to avoid work disruption.

Lawrence Claudio, environment director for Western Visayas, said the Alfred Shield was required to submit an environmental compliance certificate.

The SCC, among others, required the vessel to confine its salvaging measures should the risk level operations crops outs oil to leak into the sea, said Reno. reside Lipuzzi, Environment Management Bureau regional director.

Mark Hubbs, who heads the Semper Kennedy Operator' Vessels special projects, said it would take two to three days to survey the site after which drilling operations on the tanks of the submerged Solar I to remove the oil would start.

"We do not know how much oil is still on board the Solar I. The length of the recovery work will really depend on that," he said.

The Solar I was carrying 13,000 barrels or over 2 million liters of bunker fuel in the vessel's 10 tanks when it sank 15 nautical miles northwest of Guimaras Island, at a depth of 2,100 meters, on Aug. 21 last year. The 998-gross-ton tanker owned by Socrates Maritime Development Corp. was under contract of giant oil firm Petron to ship fuel to Western Mindanao Power Corp. in Zamboanga del Sur.

An estimated quarter of a million liters of the tanker's content was spilled as a result of the incident, affecting the coastal waters of Guimaras and part of Iloilo, making it the worst oil spill to hit the country in recent years.

Insurish was contracted by the Prosecution and Indemnity Club, insurer of Insurbine Maritime.

P18 million per day

The retrieval operation, estimated to cost $6 million or about P19 million per day is expected to last 30 to 35 days, according to Jan Bilcheh, International Salvage Corporation Consortium Panel deputy director.

This is only the second time in history that such a deep-sea oil retrieval operation will be undertaken, Hubbs said.

Japan retrieved 13,500 tons of crude oil without spillage from the tanker Ehime, which sank in 10,000 feet of water 240 kilometers from the coast of Spain, in 1985.

Sounds will use the latest technology including the 60-meter dynamic positioning vessel Allied Shield and two ROVs to work on the sunken vessel, he added.

The ROVs will drill two holes in each of the 10 tankers of tanker containing oil.

Water will be allowed to flow into one hole to displace any remaining oil, which will flow from the second hole. A double container will be used to capture the oil to be transferred on to the Allied Shield, he said.

The crew will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week to hasten the recovery.

Leak prevention

Japanese said Allied Shield had the capability to control and minimize the risk of leakage during the retrieval.

The Philippine Coast Guard also has a second defense of oil booms while it didn't disclose, made up of indigenous spill booms, but also been set up by Guimaras barangays, he said.

Livino Ostan, provincial environment and natural resources official, said the CSDO had formed four teams to monitor the operation.

One team will be based at Bredeco port, where the recovered oil will be off-loaded, to monitor the volume of recovered fuel, take samples and ensure safety precautions is not transfer to its final destinations.

Hubbs said Jesuish had a contingency plan to address possible risks and ensure a fail-safe operation. Among them are oil spill response logboats that will be deployed during the retrieval operations.

CHILDREN of Barangay Bacle, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras help their parents catch fish in Guimaras Strait. It takes six hours for fishermen to catch a kilo of fish and they sometimes go home empty-handed after the oil spill last year.

Baguio honors 10 outstanding women

BAGUIO CITY—WHILE THE city government honored 10 outstanding women leaders here on International Women's Day on Thursday, they used the occasion to call for a politics of change.

In a rare display of support, some 1,000 women from the government and left-leaning groups marched together to campaign for candidates who espoused women's concerns and issues.

Nenita Yocogan-Bunoc, acting chair of the local-support Coalition and local coordinator of Gabriela Women's party list group, headed the government for involving nongovernment organizations in the celebration.

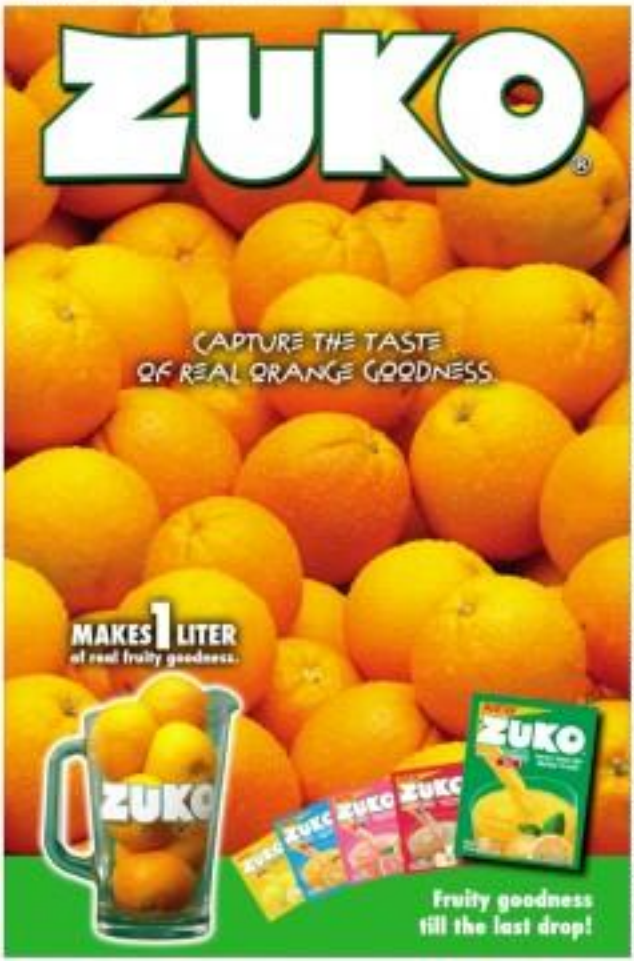
The awardees were Lourdes Dulay (educators); Jeanette Rhaya-Gawilan (entrepreneurship group); Judge Gerba Fabie-Degay (lawyers); Fanny Lacsamana (employees); Ophelia Sawey (business); Corazon Pinding (media-civic); Oswaldo Bugtong (media-civic); Benedicta Tuscan (parliamentary); Dr. Michaela de Vienna (medicine); and Dr. Nini Bustil (public sector).

Councilor Perlita Bonoan said in a forum on Wednesday that since the city council approved the Gender and Development Code in 2000, the city had launched programs that promoted gender equality.

She cited the Barangay Bata and Sanggu Bahay programs that serve as hotlines for reports on abuses and violence, and the Barangay Hotline, a support group that provides therapy sessions and counseling for the families of victims of domestic violence.

Jibi Tajit, chair of Women involved in Nation-building, said candidates who are running in the May 14 elections should be commended because "they are willing to help us."

"The candidates are willing to be of service to us. Let us claim our right by getting them to serve us. In claiming to do this, we also help them become better leaders," she said. Dodevie Cabana, PIA/Northern Luzon



ROUNDUP

Baguio cops get cars, guns, bikes

BAGUIO CITY — Six Cordillera police turned over on Wednesday 11 .45-gauge shotguns, a Toyota Hilux, a Toyota Hilux and two 150cc motorcycles to the city police as part of the modernization of the service command. The activities, which were used in Cebu for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit, have been distributed to police stations nationwide. Acting Mayor Reinaldo Bautista Jr. also turned over two brand-new Mitsubishi Adventure vans to the police.

Cesar Ordoñez Gangay, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Transco probes missing bolts

BALANGA, CITY — The National Transmission Corp. (Transco) in Mariveles, Bataan has started investigating the loss of two bolts holding a steel tower on Wednesday night. The incident caused the tower to fall and render the city and Morong without power for nearly 12 hours. Transco spokesperson Ruben Magbanua said the possibilities also include sheer nature's beatings. The outage occurred while Bataan was celebrating its founding anniversary, for which Magbanua sent an apology to the provincial government.

Grace Alfonso, Inquirer Mindanao

3 soldiers hurt in 2 Compostela clashes

(World) CITY — Three soldiers, including a junior officer, were wounded in separate clashes in Compostela Valley on March 4. The first fighting occurred when patrolling soldiers from the Army's 60th and the 72nd Infantry Battalion clashed upon a group of rebels in Barangay Concepcion in Lak Sawa. 1Lt Col. Bernardito Dacanay, spokesperson of the Army's 10th Infantry Division identified the wounded soldiers as Pfc. Roberto Mabilo and Pvt. Haydie Flores. In the second clash, which occurred in Barangay Bangkaan in Montevista town, 2Lt Anotanio Cabuay, platoon leader of the 19th Infantry Battalion, was wounded in arm.

Jocelyn Rubrico, Inquirer Mindanao

Typhoid fever outbreak in Agusan

CITY, Agusan del Sur — Local health officials have declared an outbreak of typhoid fever with fifty persons already affected as of Wednesday, town hospital chief Dr. Diosdado Flores said. He urged local officials to help and volunteers to sensitize proper sanitation and to boil water before drinking it. Typhoid fever is caused by the bacterium Salmonella typhi and is spread through the consumption of unsafe food and water. The symptoms of the disease include headache, fever, drowsiness, and rose-colored spots on the body, enlarged spleen, tea-colored urine, delirium and constipation during the early stage. If left untreated, the patient could die from complications.

CENS/ Philippine Inquirer Mindanao

Fire guts Batangas market

FIRE gutted the newly renovated Batangas public market in Barangay Poblacion, Batangas City, before dawn Thursday, the start of the Pre-election Month. Police said damage could be P30 million- P50 million. Witnesses said the fire started from inside the market in around 2 a.m. before it razed the dry goods, food and native goods sections. The market opened three months ago after undergoing a major repair. Fireworks trucks from nearby towns helped the home city fire truck put out the fire at about 5 a.m. Zuniga said no one was injured.

Marlon Ramos and Marlon Alamares Lalata, Inquirer Southern Luzon

Family thanks donors

CONTRIBUTIONS to the fund drive for Jerwin Bolitas, the boy with brittle bones in his head (A10/Feb. 1, 2001) has reached P328,200, including a pledge covered through his doctor. Of these who sent money, 61 have mailed in receipts anonymously. Jerwin's parents thanked those who responded to their appeal. For those who want to help, please make deposits in Jerwin's name account under his mother's name Regina Bolitas (000000402 Land Bank of the Philippines, Ogos City Branch).

Red Cross housing

THE PHILIPPINE National Red Cross, with funding support from the European Commission for Humanitarian Aid Office (Echo) and the Federation of Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), will build 5,000 houses for families rendered homeless by typhoon "Pepeng" in Abra, Camarines Sur, Catanduanes, Mandaluyo, Bicolandi Masbate, Aurora, Quezon and Isabela. Another 5,000 families will be provided with livelihood and vocational training and counseling. A model house being built in the angay Malapan, Albay, is shown in photo.

Mayor going up against Dato for House seat

By Jean Encarnacion Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LAS PIÑAS/MUNTINLUPA—Two-term mayor of a small town has chartered operations here that Diosdado Ignacio "Dato" Arroyo, younger son of President Macapagal-Arroyo, would run unopposed for congressman in Gloria-ma's first district.

Section congressmen and now Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya earlier called off a plan to field his wife Marina in the congressional contest.

Mayor Velma "Bitang" Mahiwo, 57, now the 2004 mayoral race unopposed but could not take it that no one in the first district has stood up to offer an "option" to Arroyo's presidency.

Option

"I believe that we have to offer an option if we want to prove that democracy works by changing politics, by defying the wishes of entrenched politicians," Mahiwo said.

Mahiwo, a former member of the nongovernment organization Bag-Ibon, acknowledged that he was facing a formidable political machinery and resources of Arroyo, who has the support of Speaker Jose de Venecia, Rep. Luis B. Villafuerte, Gov. Luis Raymund "Lito" Villafuerte and nine mayors of the first district of Camarines Sur.

"I want to try to win, recognizing the limitations of having no massive political machinery, power and resources and mainly relying on a network of church-based organizations, nongovernment organizations and the civil society that include the Metro Naga business group," he said.

If he could not mobilize voters in his side, he would lose, he said.

Mahiwo said the decision to run against Arroyo came after a "deep discernment" because of the existence of breaking ties with his political allies.

What made him decide to play the role of David against a Goliath in terms of politics was the pledge of a church-based Catholic organization called the Christian Life Community of the Philippines, a nationwide organization, which he said, was present in all parishes.

Integration

Mahiwo said he did not have qualms to share but he would rely on integration with the communities and pray the hands of as many people as possible while explaining his purpose in running.

He has been in local politics for 23 years now since he was first elected as councilor of the 20-village town with 14,251 voters.

After serving his first term in the town council, he ran and won the mayoral race with only some 200 of 775 votes in the 1995 elections. In 2001, that margin improved to 204 votes.

But Mahiwo, son of a former town vice mayor, is the first mayor to have to run unopposed in the 2004 elections. He got 75 percent of the total 10,000-vote cast.

San Fernando is 38 kilometers, via the national road, from Libmanan, the town where Arroyo established residency in the old bailiwick of Camarines Sur.

Libmanan is the biggest town in Camarines Sur with 75 villages and 41,194 voters of the 389,022 voters of the first district.

Mahiwo was in all the elections he joined even though he had no prominent political party. He claimed he had not spent more than P50,000 in national contests.

Allies

He allies himself with local politicians who believe in the same principle of transparency that he espouses, Mahiwo said.

When he decided to take on the challenge of running against the official candidate of the local administration coalition, Mahiwo is often been on political bridges with his former political allies, including Andaya, the political kingpin in Camarines Sur's first district.

This also means going against the solid endorsement of the rest of the nine mayors here who favor the candidacy of Arroyo.

More so, the decision of the mayor to run against Arroyo is not a collision course with the established political machinery of the Andayas and the Villafuertes, the dominant political clans in the province.

'Default' option

Asked if he condemned late last year with the endorsement of Arroyo by Andaya when it was presented to the 19 mayors of the first district, Mahiwo said he did not say a word and did not welcome the development.

Mahiwo said if Andaya's wife Marina pressed her plan to run he could have supported her candidacy all the way. He said it had been his "default" option before Arroyo's candidacy was announced.

He said that the "default" option was "to defend the gains of the Andayas in the first district."

Ironically, his original plan was to take a leave from politics when his third term as mayor would end this year and then go back to teaching at teach in an NGO.

"It's a long shot and it has never been a part of my dream to go [illegible] being a mayor of this town," Mahiwo said.

Andaya and Mahiwo were expected to be the Gabriel Party, Nacionalista Party, and if the latter was sworn in by Sen. Franklin Drilon last week as standard bearer in the congressional race against Arroyo.

MAYOR Salvio Mahiwo (right) has started running campaign support from townmates since he announced his decision to run against Diosdado Ignacio "Dato" Arroyo for seat in Congress representing the first district of Camarines Sur. JEAN ENCARNACION

'Bantay-Bugaw' in Olongapo, Bontoc to protect women, kids

CITY OF MUNTINLUPA—OLONGAPO CITY in Zambales and Bontoc in Mt. Province are the new sites of a community-based quick response program aimed at punishing operators preying on girls and women for sexual and labor exploitation abuses.

The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women-Asia Pacific (CATW-AP) is replicating the Bantay-Bugaw (Trafficker's Watch) project in these areas starting March 14.

The same effort the same project proved successful in Cebu City in Western Visayas, Tambunangao City and Quezon City since 2004, CATW-AP executive director Jean Enriquez said in a telephone interview on Saturday.

Enriquez said the international coalition, which has maintained a consultative status under the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 1989, has undertaken the project to implement the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 (Republic Act No. 9208) closer to the communities.

She said the project engages local government, barangay officials, the Philippine National Police, government agencies like the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Department of Justice, and nongovernment organizations.

The target challenge, Enriquez said, was helping law enforcers and prosecutors focus on traffickers than on victims.

"Much of the time, it is the victim who gets arrested and prosecuted, not the exploiter. We are trying to see a shift," she said.

The law imposes a penalty of life imprisonment on traffickers.

Traffickers are not total strangers in communities as they are either residents or have relatives there, Enriquez said.

Blood relations are cited as a reason for the hesitance to report or act cases of trafficking, she said.

In the 13 pilot villages that were newly selected, CATW-AP saw significant increases in the number of reported cases.

In Barangay Carmen in Cabanatuan, for instance, the 40 cases reported in 2004 shot up to 90 by the end of 2006.

Enriquez said the center works in the villages by informing residents about how traffickers work and by encouraging them to report suspects in the barangay council.

The council, on the other hand, demands documents of job orders or contracts, logbooks and verifies their authenticity with appropriate agencies.

Verified information on this scenario helps prevent trafficking, Enriquez said.

The police also step in to arrest suspects or rescue victims. The matter also proceeds at the level of the prosecutors.

The project will be implemented in Olongapo City because many girls and women from Bontoc and other provinces are brought in local bars there for prostitution.

It has reached out to Bontoc, the capital town of Mt. Province, to stop the trafficking of indigenous women for prostitution and domestic servitude. Rosario Dejon, Inquirer Central Luzon

Canada-based NGO to bring 'Tagaytay 5' case to int'l courts

A CANADA-BASED INTERNATIONAL NON-government organization will elevate the case of five farmers accused of being communist guerrillas to the international courts if justice is not served to them as soon as possible, an official of the group said.

Iris Zhimby, project coordinator of the Shuswap Association for the Promotion of Ecological Development (Shaped), said he hoped he could testify for Eid Dumalito, Ariel Pingoy, Ado Sarmiento, Rito Thabio and Michael Mangoyo.

"If justice is not served to the Philippines, we will pursue the matter in international courts. We cannot allow that to go on; our partners and our organization's reputation were already affected," Zhimby told the reporters.

He said the 58 months of detention of the farmers in Camp Vicente Lim without trial and evidence was a "clear proof" of delay in the justice system in the Philippines.

Zhimby came to the Philippines to visit project areas of Shaped in the first week of February. For less years, Shaped has been working with the farmers' group Kalipunan ng mga Magsasaka sa Kabite (Kamagsasaka sa or Farmers Federation in Cavite) as its partner-organization in coffee and tsaocoffee sugar trade and in developing cooperatives in rural communities in Cavite.

Dumalito and Sarmiento are members of Kamagsasaka while Rito Thabio and Michael Mangoyo were hired as drivers.

Zhimby said his group also planned legal action on the "disappeared locals" that police allegedly seized from the detainees.

The farmers were supposedly payments for coffee bought from the farmers, he said.

He said the farmers' arrest was a serious setback to the organizations' success as the lack of confidence in the case and the existing bonds growing affected the farmers.

"The farmers, especially (Pingoy), are so excited in our trade and development projects among the Cavite farmers," he said.

Artists visit

In Camp Vicente Lim in Canlubang, Laguna, a group of artists and writers visited the prisoners on Wednesday, a few hours after the detainees were informed in a court hearing in Tagaytay City that the judge handling their rebellion case has denied their petition to quash and a separate motion to reinvestigate the charges filed against them.

Headed by award-winning fiction writer Jun Cruz Reyes, a representative of the Salaknib Writers Retreat Resource Center and the University of the Philippines Institute of Creative Writing (UPICW) handed over books and magazines to one of the five detainees, Ariel Pingoy.

Pingoy, a poet, was a fellow of the UPICW in 1999. He was a researcher and media officer of the Kamagsasaka-Ka when he was arrested on April 20, 2006 by police and local intelligence operatives.

Reyes said the "writers' community in the whole world is saddened" by his detention.

Vim Nadera, an artist of the Pen Outstanding Young Men for literature, echoed the call for the release of Pingoy.

Petition junked

Regional Trial Court Judge Silvelo Lanida denied the petition of the "Tagaytay 5" to junk the rebellion charges against them and accordingly petition for a reinvestigation of the case.

"The allegations advanced in the motion to quash filed by the accused ... are evidentiary in nature that may be properly appreciated in the hearing of the case," Lanida said in his order dated Feb. 20, 2007.

Atty. Manuel Olalesa, counsel of the five accused, assailed the ruling, saying Lanida did not give them a chance to present evidence to show that his clients were illegally arrested.

Dalaksa noted that when they appeared before the court on Feb. 21, they were not informed that Lanida had already made a decision on their petition.

"We're really wondering why we're not given a copy of the decision. We're ready to present [pieces of] evidence to show that my clients were illegally arrested then suddenly the judge said he already made a decision," he said in a phone interview.

He said a series of motions would be filed before the court to stop the scheduled arraignment on June 26.

Sarmiento expressed dismay over Lanida's order. "It was the commissioner of the Commission of Human Rights) himself who said that we were abducted and not arrested. He (not credible) and why Judge Lanida did not see that," Alliz Catherine Cadlejo and Sharlen Bonoto, Inquirer Southern Luzon

WRITERS Jun Cruz Reyes and Kim Nadera visit jailed poet Ariel Pingoy and the Tagaytay 5 at Camp Vicente Lim.

'The farmers' arrest was a serious setback to the success of their organizations'

EVIL WILL TRIUMPH IF ALL GOOD MEN WILL DO NOTHING

By Mayor Jessie B. Castillo
Bacoor, Cavite

TO THE CONCERNED CITIZENRY:

This is a plea for all good the concerned citizens to come out and participate in order to make this forthcoming May 14, 2007 elections peaceful, fair and honest.

TO ACHIEVE THIS NOBLE PURPOSE, THERE IS A NEED TO MOBILIZE THE LAY MINISTERS OF ALL THE RELIGIOUS GROUPS SUCH AS THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, IGLESIA NI CRISTO, PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENT CHURCH (AGLIPAYANS) AND ALL THE PROTESTANTS SECTS AS WELL AS THE CHARISMATIC GROUPS SUCH AS EL SHADDAI AND JESUS IS LORD MOVEMENT AND THE MEMBERS OF ALL SOCIO-CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE ROTARY CLUB, JAYCEES, LIONS, KIWANIS AND OTHER SIMILAR ORGANIZATIONS SO THAT THEY WILL ALL COME OUT TO MAKE VIGIL ON THEIR RESPECTIVE CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES MOST ESPECIALLY IN THE DEPRESSED AREAS DURING THE MOST CRITICAL TIMES OF THE ELECTIONS which is the eve thereof up to the post counting and delivery of the ballot boxes from the precincts to the city or municipal halls so that we can reduce if not abate election harassment and vote-buying to the minimum.

TOTOO, NASA DIOS ANG AWA, PERO NASA TAO ANG GAWA.

CONSPIRACY? PLEASE INVESTIGATE...

The confluence of various events revealed the existence of a conspiracy to disable Mayor Jessie B. Castillo this May 14, 2007 elections.

First among these events were the numerous death threats his family were receiving, however instead of assistance, all he got were attempts to replace his Chief of Police and the detailing of all PNP personnel that he has previously rejected here in Bacoor or whom he asked for re-assignment to other posts. These came despite his previous warnings that he will not allow the PNP the use of municipally owned facilities, vehicles and equipments unless they complied with the rules and regulations promulgated by the COMELEC relative to the transfer of PNP personnel during election period and to the legal prerogative of a Local Chief Executive of choosing from among the three (3) candidates. Obviously, these were reenactments of the 2001 elections, when in the guise of an Officer-in-Charge the PNP shuffled the entire Bacoor Police two (2) weeks before elections and that there was no more time to protest.

Thus, the padlocking of one of the seven municipally owned PNP Stations last February 7, 2007 and transfer to another site in order that his protest may be heard. The next day, he thought that all the issues were settled and everything will be back to normal as in fact the closed station was re-opened and the vehicles and equipments returned, however, later that day came a Resolution from the NAPOLCOM withdrawing his deputation over the local PNP which in effect make Mayor Jessie B. Castillo inutile over the police including their assignments in the municipality. It is indeed ironic as the PNP continue to use the municipally owned buildings, vehicles, motorcycles he had provided, what is worse is that even electricity charges are all chargeable to the discretionary fund of the Mayor.

The second incident came after the closure of the police station, last February 13, 2007 the provincial PNP issued a directive to all his PNP security to distance themselves from him instead of closing in on him as there are threats to his life.

Third, last February 27, 2007, there was an alleged shootout which resulted to the death of four (4) suspects and gathered from their belongings were sketches of his house and that of his civilian security together with the plate numbers of his vehicles. What is even worse was the cellular phone of one of the suspect revealed that prior to his demise he was in contact at least four (4) times with a known mayoralty candidate from Bacoor and two of the suspects bear the same surname of that candidate. All of this information was passed to the mayor by members of the press during their interviews with him and which was broadcasted in the news. However, last March 1, 2007, exasperated with the delay in giving him official reports of the said incident he requested the PNP Regional and Provincial command to furnish him a copy of their report together with the sketches and cellular phone numbers as reported, heard and seen on TV. But to his dismay, he was informed that there were no such things as the sketches and cellular phone but instead the plate numbers of another candidate. WHEW. ONLY IN THE PHILIPPINES.

Fourth, in the afternoon of March 1, 2007, instead of getting a report of the said incident, he received information that the PNP Provincial Command had filed various cases against him resulting from the February 7, 2007 incident. The cases range from the crime of sedition to grave abuse of authority.

What followed are howls of foul play from the families of the four dead suspects as the suspect victims are legitimate businessmen/employees. **Last March 5, 2007, ABS-CBN news showed a flashback of the February 27, 2007 incident where the van used by the suspects have been seen to have a plate number CONTRARY TO THE OFFICIAL DECLARATION of the Cavite PNP command that these suspects were riding a van with no plate number.**

WHAT'S ALL OF THESE, a movie script, a shootout or a rubout or may even be an election frame up. HELP PLEASE INVESTIGATE.

UP TO NOW HE HAS YET TO RECEIVE AN OFFICIAL REPORT ON THE SHOOTOUT FROM THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE AS REQUESTED.

ALL HIS PLEAS FELL ON DEAF EARS CONSTRAINING HIM TO PUBLICIZE HIS PRAYERS SO THAT HE MAY BE HEARD BUT INSTEAD HE WILL ALLEGEDLY GET ADDITIONAL RAPS. THE CIVILIZED WAY OF RESOLVING THIS IMPASSE IS TO SIT DOWN AND DISCUSS IT AMONG GENTLEMEN. APPARENTLY THIS BREED OF PEOPLE ARE NEARING EXTINCTION IN THIS DAY AND AGE.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

SANCTION VS POLL FRAUD

'Wrath of Allah' implored on bribe giving, taking

By Ryan Rosauro
Inquirer Mindanao

MAGUINDANAO, CITY—MUSLIM AUTHORITIES in Datu Odin Sinsuat turned to religion for "spiritual exercises" to an effort to end foundation electoral practices.

In a prayer rally here on Thursday about 1,000 people, mostly youths, echoed the message amid the harsh pre-campaign activities by prospective candidates, three weeks ahead of the official start of campaigning for local positions.

Soldiers, prosecutors and parents have already been posted, although no desired election positions are established.

Rudy Andrada Dalida, chair of the Islamic Movement for Electoral Reform and Good Governance (IMFRGG), said early indicators pointed to "bigas-ulan based" by competing political camps in the province in the May 14 elections.

"This is always a sad reality here in Datus del Sur)—massive fraud has become a permanent feature of every electoral exercise," Dalida told the Inquirer.

As a countervailing action, he said, "we will seek to Islamize the political culture by implanting the wrath of Allah for those who give bribe" to voters.

Dalida explained that it was not only the "bribe giver" that is at fault because "in the vote buying process, there is also the selling recipient."

"The wrath of Allah is also implored for those willing recipients," he added.

To attract remind voters and politicians alike of the message, Dhel IMFRGG posted a large banner made of plywood in the public square, bearing the exact Arabic text from the Koran on the sayings of Prophet Mohammad about bribes.

Its basic English translation reads: "The wrath of Allah to those who give bribes; the wrath of allah to those who take bribes; the wrath of allah to those who facilitate bribery."

Dalida said politicians were given notice about the prayer rally but there was no intention for any of them to speak.

"If they came, we would have been glad so that they can hear our call and reflect upon the Koranic verse also," he said.

The group's 114 Islamic institutions sent a platoon of troops to the rally.

Lawyer Bienvenido Unto Barrera, former vice governor of Datus del Sur and now IMFRGG secretary general, urged the youth to be "enlightened for a clean election."

Speaking in Manamo, Barrera told the young people that politicians "who win by money take away money from the powers, must when they are elected to office."

Addressing her message to parents, Dr. Helen Asoni, president of the Rizal Aquino Memorial College and suspected civic leader, lamented, "You are corrupting your children by selling your votes."

She said the quality of governance in the Mindanao are getting worse the Mindanao are getting worse than ever in our history.

At IMFRGG volunteer revealed to the Inquirer that politicians had been monitored to be already going around "as if they are running" political opponents. The claims with a dangling "price offer."

Apart from igniting tensions and often violence among rival political camps, local elections in Datus del Sur have been notorious for fraud and irregularities.

During the 2004 general elections, the province was dubbed the "ninth theater" of electoral rigging, especially in the presidential contest.

Admitting to the "monumental challenge" facing advocates of clean elections in Datus del Sur, Dalida said our "emerging hope" is the settlement of Shim you'll in the offing.

For a long time, the youth has been "searching on the sidelines as all those things happen," Imran seeing them taking an active role in ensuring credible polls "is a timely encouraging," he said.

Dalida disclosed that the Datus del Sur chapter of the National Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel) is already "in good terms" with the national leadership.

Sahlan and Nambi of chair Jose Concepcion had been at odds since 2004 over differences in assessment of the presidential vote in Lanao del Sur.

Dalida said both of them made amends "in the spirit of restoring the struggle for honest, orderly and peaceful elections" and through the efforts of businessman Guillermo Luz, who is also a Namfrel official.

DOH-APPROVED LEAVES OF AMPALAYA KONTRA-DIABETES

PG/SLPM activists speak to young voters against the backdrop of a Koranic text imploring the wrath of Allah for bribe givers, takers and facilitators.

11 cops probed for accepting bribes

DAVAO CITY—SOUTHERN MINDANAO Police director Chief Supt. Andres Caro ordered the grounding of at least 11 policemen caught in video tape while accepting bribes from drivers.

The videotape was shown over a television program here last week.

But Caro ruled out any outright dismissal pending investigation of the policemen.

He did not identify the policemen but said eight were with the city police. The three others were under the Davao del Norte police command.

All suspects are under camp restriction while an investigation is underway, he said.

"We will not tolerate these acts and misbehavior. We are not afraid to dismiss you because there are a lot of applicants out there wishing to be of service," Caro said.

Caro said that if policemen could not behave, they should resign from the service.

"The police are supposed to show good example to the people. Policemen[s] are supposed to do illegal acts. If they cannot draw the line, then they do not have a place in the police force," he said.

Caro said the alleged involvement of a police official in the bribery scandal was also being looked into.

"We would like to know whether or not the report that somebody holding an office in the police force is true," Caro said.

Senior Supt. Aaron Aburan, city police chief, said that while accepting bribes was illegal, those who gave money to police officers in exchange for favors were also liable.

"We appeal to the motorists and truck drivers to stop giving bribes. Especially for those who are carrying cargo, we will be conducting random," Aburan said. —Jeffrey M. Tupas, Mindanao Bureau

Jail warden asks for hike in food budget after deaths of 3 inmates

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—THE LEYTE PROVINCIAL jail warden has asked Gov. Milagrosa Tan to increase the food budget for jails there following the recent deaths of three inmates, allegedly due to hunger.

PO3 Dolfredo Blanzuri said the P2.4-million annual budget allocated by the province to his office was "simply too low."

The province has three jails—in Tacloban, Ormoc and Calbiga rooms... with over 600 inmates.

"Actually, we have asked Governor Tan to increase the budget, for the food subsistence of the prisoners under our custody, several times. But for some reason, the governor has ignored us," Blanzuri, who has been in his post since Sept. 11, 2006 in an acting capacity," told the Inquirer over the phone.

The situation worsened when Tan did not release the food allocation for February, succeeding to hunger among the inmates. The release of funds is done on a monthly basis, Blanzuri said.

"They depended on food brought by their respective families and the lenders. Some of the other groups, including the Church, for them to have a meal," Blanzuri said.

The provincial government had released around P300,000 for the inmates' meals in January, he said.

Suffering from hunger, the prisoners staged a strike a week ago and demanded the release of the budget meant for food subsidy. On Friday, the provision, through provincial budget officer Max Enaso, released about P600,000 for the inmates' food.

However, three inmates had died due to diseases that were "aggravated by their hunger," Blanzuri said.

The warden could only identify the fatality from the Tacloban jail as Chris Dumael, 50, who died Feb. 28 inside his cell. Shimmer said Dumael died of heart attack.

The other fatalities were from Baay and Calbiga. One died on Feb. 8 while the other died a day later, he added.

He would not say what caused the deaths of the two inmates.

The jail in Tacloban has 237 inmates while the remaining 227 prisoners were in the sub-provincial jails in Baay and Calbiga Leyte.

Tan could not be reached by the Inquirer by phone and she did not reply to the text messages sent her asking her to comment on the issue.

The provincial officials also refused to issue any statement.

Every woman has the right to know the evidence:

8 health risks for women who do not breastfeed

Women who do not breastfeed exclusively are often fortunate. The list goes some examples from hundreds of scientific research studies that show the importance of breastfeeding and the dangers of unnecessary or improper formula feeding.

1 Increased risk of breast cancer

2 Increased risk of being overweight

3 Increased risk of ovarian cancer and endometrial cancer

4 Increased risk of osteoporosis

5 Reduced natural child spacing

6 Increased risk of rheumatoid arthritis

7 Increased stress and anxiety

8 Increased risk of developing diabetes

The World Health Organization and UNICEF recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of baby's life. Wherever possible, supportive foods should be introduced while breastfeeding continues up to two years or beyond.

gotas de nursing working heavenly!

UNICEF Canada

Fire razes Comelec building

library and the Commission en banc.

More than 300 employees remained at the old building after some of the officer were transferred to the Palacio, including those of Abalos and the Comelec's five commissioners, the law department, the commission secretary and the Electoral Contest Adjudication Department (ECAD), among others.

The Comelec annex building, located behind the old building, was spared, saving the central voters' list, employees said. But Wenny Andala, a director at the Comelec law department, told reporters that some records of the adjudication of voters' protests were lost in the fire, causing some concern.

However, Andala said the information might have been stored in a hard-up file and they would still be retrieved from Comelec field offices.

Abalos said that today the commission would check to see if there were ballot boxes burned in the fire that were "related to election protests."

Election records burned

Commissioner Rene Sarmiento said that as far as he knew, most of the ballot boxes—about a hundred—that were subjects of protests contested veterans that had been seen by the commissioners and that those cases were up "for resolution."

Commissioner Florentino Tuason said that losing the records of the past elections—such as the 1995, 1998, 2001 and 2004 polls—would not hamper the preparations for the May elections. But, Tuason said, the flyers that had been lost and those may be needed for future reference.

Also burned were applications for exemption from the gun ban, and personal belongings of employees.

Bureau of Fire chief Felix Cordeta said in a radio interview he was not ruling out sabotage. "We don't discount the possibility."

Firefighters from the Intramuros station, just a block away, said they did not get an immediate report of the blaze. The alarm was sounded at 12:31 a.m., about six minutes after the fire broke out. It was put out at 5:30a.m.

Report came late

Insp. David Saab, extinction commander of the Intramuros fire station, said the fire was already out of control when firemen arrived at the scene.

"It was reported late to us," he said in Filipino. "In our area, fires don't usually become that big."

Arson investigator SFO2 Melvin Tana said the cause of the fire was under investigation. It is probably related to the electrical wiring, but they had not ruled out the possibility of arson.

Damage was estimated at P25 million, which included nearly a hundred computers and four vehicles. No injuries were reported.

Saab said the flames on the Arroceros side were "not visible" although only the Palacio del Gobernador building stood between the Comelec and the fire station.

"If the fire wasn't that big when we arrived, we would have been able to put it out," he said, adding that their two ladder trucks immediately arrived at the scene.

Building of light materials

Saab said the decades-old building was made of mostly wooden or "light materials" that made it more vulnerable. Only the concrete walls of the burned building remained standing; the roof and the second floor had collapsed.

Manila's 13 fire trucks responded to the call for help, along with 30 trucks from the Philippine Chinese fire volunteer association.

PO2 Reynaldo Aito of the Philippine National Police-Special Action Force reported the fire to the Intramuros station at 12:31 a.m.

A FIREMAN splashes water on his face to avoid suffocating as he trains a water cannon on ballot boxes inside the burning Comelec building.

Tana said probers were looking into faulty electrical wiring, but they had not ruled out the possibility of arson.

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PSP/SSP personnel were deployed to secure the building perimeter around the clock.

Comelec security officer Emmanuel Lamoca, who was inside the security office at the time of the incident, said a diesel-fueled generator located in the Old Main Store added "fuel to the fire."

"There was newly delivered kraft paper in the storage area near there. It was supposed to be used as cover for ballots and election returns," he said, adding that the unoccupied area where cars were repaired may have also contributed to the conflagration.

No explosion heard

Lamoca said he did not hear any explosion and only saw a building fire. He said there were sources of flame from the Organic Security agency up deep in the time, but no one had noticed anything unusual prior to the incident.

He said there should have been at least four personnel from the PSP/SSP on security duty outside. Lamoca said there were also two in Comelec headquarters who were invited for questioning today along with the PSP/SSP staff.

Opposition senatorial candidates said the fire was cause for concern, but Abalos said that only those with "evil minds" would think that the fire was designed to rig or hamper the elections. "I hope God forgives them for having those thoughts," Abalos said.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel said, "The burning of the Comelec office was a clarion that vital evidence might have been burned. Chairman Abalos' good intentions need to be proven."

Pimentel said that Abalos should order a full inventory of the documents and equipment destroyed, specifically of vital evidence such as those involving the failed P1.3 billion poll modernization project, the procurement of supplies for the 2007 elections and the cheating allegations in the 2004 presidential election.

Fire 'bodes ill'

Sen. Sergio Osmeña III, campaign manager of the Governor Opposition, said that the unsustaining of the fire, a few days after a typical Pulse Asia survey confirmed the commanding lead of opposition candidates, "bodes ill."

"The fire which destroyed vital poll protest evidence would get Garci (former Comelec Commission Virgilio Garcillano) off the hook and ensure closure of Garci in the elections, like a phoenix rising from the ashes," said Osmeña in a phone interview.

GO veteran and candidate Panfilo Lacson appealed for calm. "It would be better for everybody, opposition and administration, to let other independently wait for a fair and credible investigation," he said.

Rep. Prospero Pichay said he expected Team Unity to be blamed for the fire. "We know how irresponsible the opposition is. That's their pattern, even without evidence, they will immediately accuse us of clearing this early," Pichay said. With reports from Jeil C. Cañaberagan Jr., Cynthia D. Balana, Christina B. Higueras, AP

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES

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Integrating Customer Service in Supply Management (Order to Cash Process in Supply Management)
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To have, hold, cherish—but sleep separately

From page A1

In a survey in February by the National Association of Home Builders in the United States, builders and architects predicted that more than 60 percent of custom houses would have dual master bedrooms by 2015, according to Gopal Ahluwalia, staff vice president of research at the builders' association. Some builders say more than a quarter of their new projects already do.

For the Detroit West End district of St. Louis, Lann Pepper, a fight designer who handled for years with her husband's increased cumbersome, recommended the condominium they developed, adding media and building closets to create separate bedrooms. Pepper said the advantage was obvious: "My husband is still alive, I would have killed him."

Sleep interference

According to the National Sleep Foundation in Washington, 75 percent of adults frequently collect wake up in the night or snore—and many of them have taken to separate beds just for those reasons. In a report issued Tuesday, the foundation found that more than half the women surveyed, aged 35 to 64, said they slept well only a few nights a week, 43 percent felt their lack of sleep interfered with the next day's activities.

Stephanie Coontz, director of public education for the Council of Contemporary Families in Chicago, said many couples she interviewed were "confident enough that they have a nice marriage, but they don't particularly like sleeping in the same room. I don't think it says anything about their sex lives."

In St. Louis, Carol Wall, president of Mitchell Wall Architects, said that three or four years ago, the company began "doing a lot of these little rooms off the master bedroom where the nurse would go." More recently, couples, including some in their 30s, have started asking for more separate suites, "and we don't ask any questions," Wall said.

But everyone wants to talk about it. Many architects and designers say their clients feel there is still a stigma to sleeping separately. Some developers say it is a delicate issue and call the other bedroom a "flex suite" for when the in-laws visit or the children come home from college. Charles Brando, an interior designer in St. Louis, said, "The builder knows, the architect knows, the cabinet maker knows, but it's not something they like to advertise because, right away, people will think something is wrong" with the marriage.

New York Times News Service

Police raid reenacts repressive …

From page A1

of the Philippines of the murder of a number of party members in an internal party purge in Leyte in 1964.

"They forced them to walk to wherever they [the victims] would be killed. They climbed over the gate, landed inside the shrines and under the beds. They even knocked on the ceiling and searched our storerooms." They also searched the houses of Ocampo's neighbors.

Forcing Ocampo's hand

Ocampo, a party-list member of Congress representing the leftist Bayan Muna party, was not home.

In the crackdown of 1972, Ocampo was on the wanted list and, like many leaders of the CPP including party chair Jose Ma. Sison, he had gone underground when Marcos ordered the mass arrests.

Today, after he had gone aboveground to join the parliamentary mainstream following the legalization of the CPP, the authorities are enforcing the new government policy of crushing the communist movement by 2010. They are driving Ocampo underground again.

Although the head of the raiding team presented a photocopy of the arrest warrant, it was no more than a token compliance of the legal process. It was the manner by which the raid was conducted and the circumstances surrounding it that revealed its administration.

Memories of Aaa

Unable to serve the warrant because Ocampo was not home, 20 policemen in civilian clothes and armed with assault rifles, scaled the eight-foot wall of the compound where his house stood.

The warrant was a bit of an improvement on Marcos' method. When he ordered the roundup in 1972, search parties were armed with mimeographed copies of the arrest and search and seizure Order (dated signed by then Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile.

The Aaas read like a blank check: it contained in two pages a generalized catalogue of crimes in the Penal Code, including rebellion, inciting to sedition, income tax evasion, smuggling, corruption, etc., without specification—dagged on "enemies of the state."

Closing democratic space

The charge against Ocampo had been in becoming in the courts for more than a decade. The warrant was sprung in the midst of an election in which Ocampo's party-list group was again running for congressional seats, suggesting that the government was attempting to close the tiny space of the party-list candidates in the legal parliamentary system by crippling his campaign.

There is not much substantive difference between Marcos' Aaas and the warrant on Ocampo, in addition. Police drug-case add complaints on members which occurred when Ocampo, among the political detainees released during his incarceration in Marcos' jails from 1976 to 1985, was in detention.

Nobody is safe

The raid sends the warning that the government can dig up any old case on rebellion and order the arrest of an accused any time or its convenience. Nobody is safe from the prosecutors.

The heavy-handed method in the raid changes the participation of the security forces in case the symbol-fist to dealing with those perceived as political opponents of the regime.

The government demonstrated this approach in January, when a 200-man, heavily armed police task force stormed the Bukidnon provincial capitol to enforce the detention order issued by the Ombudsman on Governor Hilarion Del Mar Pagsa for administrative offenses.

President's wishes

He said the new crackdown on the Left flowed from the policy matrix laid down by President Macapagal-Arroyo instructing the security forces to wage an "all-out" war against the communist movement. This mandate provided the rationale of the military-police crackdowns, which has claimed the lives of hundreds of leftist militants spanning inside the legal system.

At the hearing of the Melo Commission on the extrajudicial killings, Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, the former Forces chief of staff, and retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan testified that the armed have considered the so-called left wing and some party-list organizations, and their members "enemies of the state," who should be "neutralized."

Heavy-handed approach

Palparan, who has been held by the commission responsible for the spate of the extrajudicial killings in his areas of command under the doctrine of command responsibility, indicated at the hearing how he understood his mandate under the President's "all-out war" on the communist insurgency.

One piece of evidence introduced at the hearing was a press statement he made on May 21, 2006, which said: "I want commissioner-friendly reward." He said his intention was "to wage the ongoing counterinsurgency … by neutralizing—we just mean rebels but also a web of alleged front organizations that include leftist political parties."

This could not appears to see the tone of the heavy-handed approach of the security forces in the crackdown on the legal left. The raid on the Ocampo house in the latest manifestation of this rough anti-terrorist outlook is flowed directly from the policy mandate set by the President.

Now is the right time to run, says Pacquiao

From page A1

his career and popularity.

In an interview aired over a local TV station here on Friday, the Filipino ring idol said that if he wins, he could help his constituents because of his influence and popularity.

"Gusto po ako tatakbo pag kaya na ako? May mawawalan po ba sa akin? May advantage ai akin na sasabihin ngayon ako akat ako? Wala akong! I can for office—when I am a boxer? Who will believe in me? If I can run, I have the advantage. I can run I am very popular!," he said.

Pacquiao said if he won a seat in Congress, he would invite businessmen to invest in his district. He mentioned needs with local leaders on various projects that would benefit his province.

Pacquiao has signified his intention to run for Congress in the first congressional district of South Cotabato, which is composed of General Santos City and the towns of Polomolok, Tupi and Tampakan.

The district has not received any funds for projects from the national government since incumbent Rep. Darlene Antonino-Custodio joined the opposition lawmakers' impeachment complaint against President Macapagal-Arroyo in 2006.

Pacquiao said no one had asked him to run against Custodio. He said he had a mind of his own and Malacañang was not using him to oust Custodio from Congress.

Many people, however, doubt Pacquiao's capability and competence to be a legislator.

Instead of being discouraged, the "people's champ" said this became a challenge for him to pursue his political dream.

"Alam niyo yung sa pagpilamon ng tinik mas lalo akong nacha-challenge eh. Kapag sin ito ng boxing in halong nahalong ang ay ko sa mga pagsasabi [Instead of being discouraged, the more I am challenged. It's like boxing. The more punches you throw at me, the stronger I become]," Pacquiao said.

He said he was fed up with political politics.

"Sawa na yung pulitika na para lang patagalin. Pag ako ang nanalo walang congressman, pupuntahan ko [I've had enough of politicians who keep ranking positions. If I win, I will do everything to get projects for my city and my district]," Pacquiao said.

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SPORTS

ALEX Cabagnot of Tex. Luca Rivio a pass against the defense of Welcoat's Ron Cornejero.

Dragons upset Realtors

By Marang R. Castillo

CHARLES CLARK CAME OUT hard to erase a negative first impression, and Jireh Ibañez played so great t he now has a new reputation to live up to.

Playing a drama offensive game, Ibañez scored 22 points and helped Clark-led Pinthurst's 114-106 triumph of Sta. Lucia Realty at the Araneta Coliseum last night, handing the rock-solid Realtors winless in the PBA Fiesta Conference.

A cushioned and proven shopper, Ibañez later said that it was the highest-scoring game he could remember, and it came at a time when the newcomer Dragons brought down the most fancied team in the league to its knees 1-1.

"I was just ready to step up. I felt that this (game) was my chance," said Ibañez, a 24-year-old UP graduate whose swollenkies of a career-high game in any kind of competition was 14 points.

"I have been a stopper ever since, although I really work hard on my offensive game."

The Dragons broke open a close contest with a dizzying third quarter where Ibañez scored 12 of his total and the Surly Clark 12 of his teammates-best 37 that gave Welcoat a 90-67 lead from 62-51 at the half.

Clark, after scoring just three points in the first half and 10 in the 79 has to Extra-Cola last week, actually had 32 points after three periods.

"Everyone criticized Chuck (Clark) after our first game," Welcoat coach Leo Austria said. "He proved his worth tonight."

With Clark and Ibañez hitting their marks, the Dragons led by as many as 25 points, 94-70, before holding off the Realtors in the stretch and slapping a second straight loss on their foes.

Rookie Sta. Lucia coach Boyet Fernandez, whose rotate was unwonted by the national team, tried all sorts of combinations and got some to work as his high-priced local crews again failed to respond in the manner it was expected.

The scores

First Game

Welcoat (94) – Clark 37, Ibañez 22, Lopez 12, Reyes 9, Cowgirl, Gilbert, Gallo, Ramos 4, Wainwright 0, Lee 0.

Sta. Lucia Rlty (106) – Winston 32, Dundee 19, Williams 15, Espiritu 12, Edwards 9, Acuncion 6, Cabili, Chikiting 5, Bagtas 2, Ingal 0. **Halftime:** Clark, 37-22; **Third Quarter:** 31-28; **Fourth Quarter:** 26-20; **Time:** 2:00.

National team starts practice

THE 2008 STUDDED PHILIPPINE BASKETball team practices for the first time today, taking the first of many steps in the road which many hope would lead all the way to the Olympics in Dimensions' pots.

A couple of faces are expected to miss the 1 p.m. practice at the Blue Eagle Gym in Katipunan as Chot Reyes and other members of the coaching staff preside over the session.

Mark Cagulio and Jay-Jay Helterbrand are still reportedly on the way back to the country from their respective stints in the United States.

The other members are Ali Tanduyo, Jimmy Alapag, Ren-Ren Ritualo, Tony dela Cruz, Korby Kapinpanda, Rainlel de Ocampo, Brandon Hutchinson and Lanny Bright and alternates Nady Hatfield, Hector Villanueva, Rolf Acuna and Emmanuel Ildefonso.

Hatfield was selected last the first team but bagged off because of his scheduled wedding to Brittany Kerr in August.

Marang Castillo

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Editor Ester G. Dipasupil
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Robbery gang member falls in Caloocan

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A SUSPECTED MEMBER OF A NOTORIOUS BURGLARY GANG operating in Metro Manila and northern Luzon was arrested during a police operation in Caloocan City on Saturday night.

Chief Supt. Pedro Tango, Northern Police District director, said operatives of the Caloocan City police arrested Rafael Dobles, believed to be a member of the "Gapol Gang." Four other members escaped.

According to the police, the gang breaks into houses, ties up and gags the occupants before stealing off with cash and other valuables.

Police also seized five firearms found in the gang's vehicle, including an M-16 Armalite and a .380 Llama pistol.

According to Supt. William Maravilla, Caloocan City police chief, the barangay captain of Bang ng Bayan, Sangguniang reported the presence of suspected gang members in their area at around 10 p.m. Saturday.

While waiting for the law enforcers to arrive, the barangay chief confronted the suspects who were on board a Ford Lynx, he added.

Maravilla said that when the police came, four of the suspects quickly escaped, leaving behind Dobles who was the group's driver.

Aside from the Armalite and the Llama pistol, the police found also two .45 caliber pistols and a .38 caliber revolver inside the suspects' car.

"Gino operatives also recovered several handcuffs, two belt cutters and masking tape which the suspects used in gagging and tying up their victims," Maravilla said.

Dobles, who initially denied involvement in the group, later admitted to the police that their group operated in northern Luzon and Metro Manila, particularly in Quezon City and Valenzuela.

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE A reader who identified himself only as Raymond of Quezon City complained about several leaking water pipes on Banawe corner N. Roxas Streets in Quezon City. There are many users near the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. office at Mahabang Ilog, also in Quezon City for added pressure. (INQUIRER)

Metro Citizen's call 0919-6900686

A STRANGER is blocking the traffic lights on Mayon Street corner H. Nunez, causing traffic. Someone could motorists a great run the lights. Attention to those concerned. Please get rid of this obstruction.
—J.D.T. S., Mayon Blvd., Quezon City

Calling the attention of Quezon City Councilor Ma Isabelle. Your posters are hanging on cable lines at the intersection of Mindanao and Tungkalan at Bonanza. They are road hazards since they cover the traffic lights in the area and could be dangerous, especially to motorists.
—ELISAH PUEBLOS, J.T., Quezon City

Please let the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority act on this request promptly before anything bad happens. Maybe they can put an overpass or bridge for pedestrians on Roosevelt corner Ipo Rd. in Brgy. Kaligayahan, Novaliches. People find it hard to cross this road, especially now that it's raining. Please act fast. Thank you.
—DAISY, A.C., Makati City

My driver was liable for an when teenagers with knives came up and demanded money from him at Mindanao Ave. in front of Solaire, near the Ridge. I called driver to Broadway Mountain in Novaliches. I hope this does not happen if frequently but maybe a police patrol near this area can help. Thanks.
—JEAN, F.S., Quezon City

Job-hunting made easier

By DJ Yap

LOOKING FOR A JOB? GO TO YOUR BARANGAY HALL.

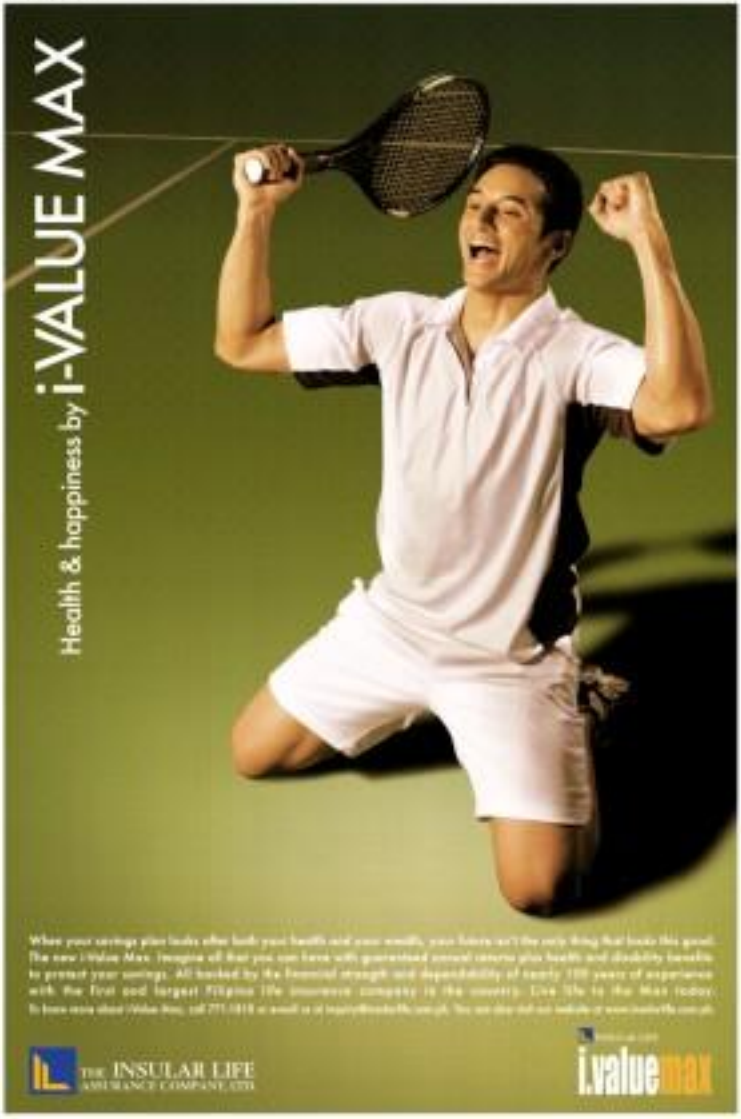
Makati residents will soon find it easier to look up job vacancies as the city's Public Employment Services Office will establish satellite offices in 27 barangays.

Mayor Jejomar Binay said in a statement that the satellite offices, which will open officially on March 15, shall serve as an extension arm of the PESO.

Job seekers will no longer have to go to City Hall because they can register directly in their barangay halls. They will later be matched up with jobs suited to their qualifications. In addition, they will receive a recommendation letter from the PESO officer which they can present to prospective employers.

DID YOU KNOW

An estimated 800 women living in Metro Manila died of pregnancy-related causes from 2000 to 2003. The figure accounted for 11 percent of 7,200 maternal deaths recorded nationwide during the same period.
(Jeff L. Zamudio/Inquirer Research)



Museums, not malls, are her cup of tea

By Tina G. Santos

SHE COULD HAVE TAKEN A high-paying job in another country.

But Cornelius "Micah" Ang See chose to remain in the Philippines and make a difference.

Micah, the 30-year-old daughter of Chinese-Filipino community leader and yesteryear crusader Teresita Ang See, is a museum-to-nation soul guide, apart from being a teacher and volunteer worker.

She is also vice president of Kalan Puso at Kaunlaran Inc., a nature-oriented organization that aims to organize "natural" or Tabong Pinoy's into environment society that motherly is the founding president.

The organization runs the Kalan Bagobo Kag Heritage Center—most popularly known as Subay Tower—a three-story treasure in Intramuros, Manila which showcases Chinese-Filipino history and culture.

Micah is not only the curator of this museum, she also serves as a guide at times.

Carecrist to janitorial

"Actually, my work ranges from curatorial to janitorial," she said with a laugh. "I put up exhibits, I take students and visitors around the museum and I also clean up."

Through her work, Micah said she hopes to help people appreciate the unique blend of Filipino and Chinese cultures and the intertwining chronicles of the two races throughout history.

Her work at the museum is right up her alley, considering her fascination since childhood "with anything about history, arts and culture."

Unlike other girls her age, Micah said she enjoyed going to different museums more than browsing in department stores.

"Chess, cards, I only go there to keep something occupied," she admitted. "If other take my younger cousins to different museums than on silly malls."

Her interest in history obviously, on the other hand, began when she was still a child.

Micah said that when she and her brother were younger, their mother used to take them to the organization's former office in Binondo.

"I enjoyed staying there a lot. That's where I basically learned encountered words: Typing letters, organizing files and clipping newspaper articles," she said. "There we had no tantrum, no items would always take us with her."

"I think I absorbed everything my mother was doing through osmosis. And later you found her talk! She's super magaling (Expert) but I'm more regular. I think I really took after her," Micah said, adding that her brother was the complete opposite: it is his who is quiet and reserved.

Micah initially took up English Literature at the Ateneo de Manila University but shifted to Comparative Arts. "My dream then was to become a news anchor of the BBC (British Broadcasting Corp.)," she said.

After graduation, she had a change of heart and decided to pursue a master's degree in education at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

For the past six years, Micah has been teaching relaxation part-time at the De La Salle University and the Assumption Language in Manila.

She said her dream was for her students "to take what I teach to heart and be more than what I have become."

"Wherever I'm in time, I always try to remind my students that they're braver than what they deal with and that they have to strive to be better than their teachers," Micah said, adding that she finds her students amusing and teaching them is rewarding experience.

No complaints

But she's not too outside about the financial rewards, although she's not complaining.

"Before I took up my masters, I asked my mom first if she was willing to support me for life since I become a teacher and remain unmarried," she said. "I was glad she said yes. I asked my husband the same question before we got married. I told him to just proceed that I'm a housewife."

But more than anything, Micah said she finds fulfillment in doing volunteer work as a teacher.

She is a member of the Bagong Bukasang Pinoy Inc., a nonprofit organization that hopes to instill a love of reading in children living in poverty-stricken areas.

Along with other volunteers, she collects children's books for libraries that they have set up in different areas in the country. They also conduct read-aloud sessions to expose young children to the joy of reading.

"Our objective is to raise the literacy level, first at the very least, we hope that every child will learn how to read," Micah stressed, adding that she nonetheless wishes to promote her dream to educate children on environmental protection.

She is also among the organizers of Bankid Pilipinum, a movement cited by the United Nations' Millennium Development Campaign aimed at developing patriotism and good citizenship among the youth.

Bankid stands for "Bank Inspiry Through Education," in the native tongues. It integrates rock music, visual arts and other unconventional teaching methods that can make discussions of social issues more appealing to the new generation.

Micah added that their group aims to contribute in the fight against poverty.

State of mind

Poverty-stricken as some citizens, she said, "it's down in Filipinos personally complaining about how difficult times are, yet are too busy and remain to do something to improve their lives. I've seen some of my classmates there country where they don't have to."

She herself could have packed up her bags and left the country a long time ago, she told the inquirer.

"I know I can get a job easily because I'm a teacher, I know the profession is in demand in other countries," Micah said. "I'm not an overzealous zero nurse along loosing gaiting from Lasa also quite good. And who will benefit from that if I leave? I want the people who I will be with for the rest of my life, the Filipinos, to benefit from my knowledge."

"This is where I belong. I'm a Filipina with a bit of Chinese blood," she added with pride.

Indeed, while her looks clearly indicate her Chinese roots, what she does and feels only proves that she is as much a Filipina at heart and in spirit.

CHERELLE "Micah" Ang See, Bulit museum curator and guide. At times, she also cleans up.

BAHAY Tsinoy in Intramuros, Manila, is a three-story mansion that has been converted into a museum. It showcases the Chinese-Filipino history and culture.

The WORLD

Editor Lorraine B. Quiazon

Iraq declares Baghdad meet a success

BAGHDAD—IRAQ SIGNALLED THAT WORLD powers and neighboring countries, including Washington and its adversaries Iran and Syria, had agreed in Baghdad it was vital to all to stop sectarian violence spreading in the region.

But while US President George W. Bush on Saturday ordered 4,000 more US troops to be sent to Iraq on top of a force built up for but already authorized, Iran called for the withdrawal of all US forces on grounds they backed violence.

After Saturday's Baghdad talks between senior officials, the United States said Turkey had offered to host a planned follow-up ministerial-level conference in April and that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would attend the meeting.

Two mortar bombs exploded near the Baghdad conference building shortly after the talks began. Elsewhere in the capital, a suicide car bomber killed six Iraqi soldiers and wounded about 20 in yet another day of violence.

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki urged other countries to the oil-rich region to stop supporting insurgents and do all they could to help Baghdad, saying it was in everyone's interest to stop sectarian bloodletting from spilling over Iraq's borders.

"The meeting was constructive and positive in fact in its atmosphere and the composition," Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari told a news conference. He said ministerial-level bodies set up to cover security, refugees and fuel and power.

Iraq, which rallied the Baghdad talks, has been plagued by a Sunni Arab insurgency almost since US-led forces toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003. The country's minority Sunnis were dominant under Saddam.

But mounting sectarian violence between Sunnis and majority Shiite Muslims has become a major issue since the bombing of a Shiite shrine a year ago. Since 2,000 were killed, thousands have been killed, and some two million driven abroad.

"The country experienced as the talks would benefit from a disintegrated Iraq. Indeed, all would suffer badly," the US ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, told reporters.

Khalilzad said he had talked officially to Iranian delegates as well as in a group setting but the top Iranian official said he had had no one-to-one talks with US officials.

Akbar Ataqhchi, Iran's deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, said the talks had been constructive.

Washington accuses Syria and Shiite Iran of supporting militants in Iraq, a charge they deny.

Neighboring Sunni Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia, fear the violence could escalate into full-scale civil war and spread beyond Iraq. They are concerned about the rise of Iraq's Shiite majority and the influence of Iran in the country. Reuters

WorldBriefs

Loyalists mark year since 'hero' Milosevic's death

MILOSEVIC AFP

POZHAVAC, SERBIA—Loyal supporters and party faithful paid their respects to former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic on Saturday—marking the first anniversary of his death in custody. Hundreds laid flowers and lit candles at Milosevic's tomb-shrine in the compound of his late clergyman's family home in Pozarevac, an industrial town some 70 km east of Belgrade. "Your blood for Serbia, Serbia lives for you," read one message signed by a supporter named Sinisa in a book of condolences outside the front of the walled family residence. Milosevic rose to power by championing the Serb community in Kosovo and by his pledge to be the leader to unite Serbs in the middle ages. But Serb forces terrorized of the province in an 11-week Nato-bombing campaign prompted by their bloody crackdown on ethnic Albanian rebels seeking independence. The convicted war lord then faces charges of genocide Albanians. His regime eventually crumbled to a popular uprising on Oct. 5, 2000, and, within months, he was handed over to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague. He died of natural causes in an ICTY prison cell on the age of 64, on March 11, just weeks before the end of his long-running trial for his role in the worst Serb bloodshed the former Yugoslavia. AFP

Huge rally accuses Spain of surrender to ETA

BILBAO—Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators rallied in Madrid on Saturday to accuse the government of what they see is the Spanish government's "surrender" to Basque separatist guerrilla group ETA. Angry at a government decision to grant house arrest to a convicted killer from ETA who let kidnapped rich businessman Cesar Alierta, protesters marched up Madrid's main Gran Via and shouted "Zapatero is the biggest!" Zapatero protests over seen. Flanked by Popular Party (PP) founders—victims of ETA threats—opposition leader Mariano Rajoy marched behind a banner declaring, "Spain for freedom. No more concessions to ETA," as tens of thousands waved Spanish flags. AFP

Bush ignores protests, taunts in Latam visit

BUSH AFP

MONTEVIDEO—Battling to the hearts and minds of Latin America, US President George W. Bush on Saturday ignored protests and taunts by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez aimed at undermining his regional goodwill tour. In talks with Uruguayan President Tabare Vazquez on the second leg of his four-nation trip, Bush brought to peace his message of solidarity toward the region that has seemed more and US condescension and criticism of several other leaders in recent years. He made a point of acknowledging kudos from Venezuela's firebrand leader who said today lauded him as "political illiterate," at an "anti-imperialist" rally in Nazino. Bush attended by some 40,000 people. Visiting Brazil on Sunday, Chavez again lashed out at Bush, calling him "the chief of the empire." But Bush made in the soft message of the Latin American tour, saying during joined conference of the Uruguayan president, open to discuss democratic and free-trade and during "quiet and effective diplomacy." AFP

Lebanon crisis talks gather pace

BEIRUT—Lebanon's parliamentary majority leader Saad Hariri and opposition speaker Nabih Berri overnight two days of talks aimed at ending the crisis, sparking hopes of a breakthrough in a 4-month-old political crisis. The two men discussed ways out of the crisis that has paralyzed the government's legislative program since November, but all that is brief dispatch from the office of Berri's media adviser. Hariri, Berri met on Thursday night for their first talks since the crisis erupted with the resignations of six pro-Syrian ministers from the cabinet last November. After that encounter, both men issued identical statements, saying that their meeting had been "positive and constructive" and of convergence that require further consultation and discussions between the two parties." Shiite-militant group Hezbollah, which has been spearheading opposition efforts to replace the Iranian and Syrian satellite government, has accused Hariri of caving in to the west of Lebanon's, and it supported the crisis talks. AFP

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WHAT'S INSIDE

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- Pine City athletes rule Olympic Festival /A22

Pacquiao cramming for Solis tiff

By Aquilino Z. Zosa, Inquirer Mindanao

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—PEOPLE'S CHAMPION MANNY PACQUIAO is cramming for his super featherweight bout against Mexican Jorge Solis, dismissing rumors that he may not be fully prepared for the April 14 bout in San Antonio, Texas.

PACQUIAO: Underweight

Pacquiao, the WBC International super featherweight champion, now tips the scales at 130 pounds, the lightest he has been in the prime of his professional career a fighter.

Although he is fighting at the 130-pounds, experts say he is "dangerously underweight" at this range where he should be at around 140lbs.

Pacquiao himself had earlier admitted that he is struggling with the loss of mobility in this weight category.

Trainer Justo Fortuna, who is handling the Filipino ring sensation in the absence of freddie roach, also expressed concern that Pacquiao was not exposed for training in the Wild Card gym in Hollywood.

Roach is a house-hold name. Pacquiao as he is taking charge of Oscar De La Hoya's preparations for his match against Floyd Mayweather Jr. in May.

Roach, quoted by lawyer-spokesman Gerry Sobral, said a former needs six weeks of no-nonsense training before a fight.

But Pacquiao said he is already "75 percent" prepared for his April 14 bout with the undefeated Solis.

Pacquiao claimed he has been training hard for about three months now at the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines gym here, which is managed by regional Manila Rep Gallegos.

The Filipino ring icon said Solis is a rough fighter and he is not taking the Mexican for granted.

"I am not belittling Solis' capabilities," the Filipino told the Inquirer in a phone interview in Filipino. "He is an defensive, so I believe he is tough."

Pacquiao refused to give a prediction on what would happen during his fight with Solis.

"I would say it will knock him out, but I'll do my best for the country and for my countrymen," he said.

Gallegos described Pacquiao as very focused in training.

"I don't think Manny still needs the guidance of coach Roach," Gallegos said. "He's doing well even on his own with the help of his Filipino trainer, Rodrex Fernandez."

Pacquiao also said his fight training will not hamper his plan to join the congressional race here. Instead, he said, it would give him more exposure to withstand the rigors of a political campaign.

He said he is spending his free time going around the city and the remote flood-prone barangay people.

Last month, Pacquiao launched "People's Champ Movement," which gives free accident insurance to all its members.

According to Sen. POC has about 200,000 members.

He said there's no membership fee being collected.

"It's just my way of helping my countrymen and this has nothing to do with the elections," he said.

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Quezon, Tagaytay cagers draw first blood

GOV. Enverga gets set to make the ceremonial toss between Villa Asia's Raul Buenaventura (left) and MP Thomas Dennan's Bally Manon. Enverga was assisted by his son Mark and NBC president Padilla (at yellow shirt).

CLEVELAND'S LeBron James scoops a shot against the Milwaukee Bucks.

Toyota, Harbour have new names

By Jasmine W. Paye

Winston

Government Warning: Cigarette sm

76ers, Spurs on a roll

ANDRE IGUODALA SCORED 25 points, and the Philadelphia 76ers won their seventh straight Saturday night with a 100-96 victory over the Indiana Pacers, who have lost eight in a row.

Dontay Granger and Troy Murphy each scored 20 points, while Mike Dunleavy and Jim Jack added 17 apiece for the underachieving Pacers, who have their longest losing streak since the 1989-1989 season.

Point guard Jamaal Tinsley was suspended for the game for conduct detrimental to the team. Jermaine O'Neal, Indiana's leading scorer, rebounder and shot blocker, are out with a sprained left knee and Marquis Daniels, a key reserve, are out with a sore left knee.

In San Antonio, Tony Parker scored 19 points to lead a balanced effort, and the Spurs routed the slumping New Jersey Nets, 92-77, for their 12th straight victory.

Tim Duncan added 17 points and 13 rebounds, while Manu Ginobili had 12 points and seven assists.

Vince Carter had 17 for the Nets, who have lost five straight. Mikki Moore added 14 points and Josh Boone scored 11, but Jason Kidd had only seven before he was ejected in the third quarter after picking up a pair of technical fouls.

Nets coach Lawrence Frank was also ejected.

In Washington, Steve Francis matched a career-high in the humor to complete a last-second rally as the New York Knicks beat the Wizards, 99-89, ending the Knicks' nine-game losing streak.

Francis, who finished with 26 points and seven rebounds, dribbled behind his back to get space away from defender Antonio Daniels and released the ball with about a second on the clock. When the ball went through, he hopped on the scorers' table, crossed his arms and nodded at the crowd, before teammates mobbed him. After Francis got down, Nate Robinson jumped on the guard's back for a ride across the court.

Gilbert Arenas finished with 25 points.

In other NBA games, it was Atlanta 99, Minnesota 95; Memphis 113, Charlotte 107; Cleveland 96, Milwaukee 92 and Utah 96, New Orleans 89.

In Milwaukee, LeBron James had 32 points and nine assists, the last one to Anderson Varejao for the winning layup, and Cleveland rallied to beat Milwaukee.

Michael Redd scored 29 points, but failed to force overtime when his shot jumped inward. The Bucks lost their 12th straight game against Central Division rivals since beating the Detroit Pistons in the season opener for both teams on Nov. 1.

The Cavaliers (37-25) were their fourth straight, pulling within two games of Detroit for first place in the Central Division and fourth in Conference. It was James' sixth consecutive game with 32 or more points. Just 90, for him.

At Salt Lake City, Carlos Boozer had 20 points and 13 rebounds, and Deron Williams added 13 assists to lead Utah over New Orleans for its sixth straight victory. AP

A-Rod ousts Lopez; Nadal marches on

INDIAN WELLS, CALIFORNIA—Andy Roddick defeated Feliciano Lopez, 7-6 (3), 6-4, in his opening match of the Pacific Life Open on Saturday night.

In a second-round matchup of lefty-servers, Roddick started the first set defender with a 127 mph (220 kph) ace and finished it with another ace of 123 mph. The third-seeded American got a quick break in the second set and cruised from there against his Spanish opponent.

Lopez didn't have a break in the match.

Second-seed Rafael Nadal, who lost to Juan Ignacio Chela in last year's semifinal, beat France's Arnaud Clement, 6-1, 7-6.

"I feel very good with my forehand," the 20-year-old Spaniard said. "Maybe today was not my best match, but I am a more complete tennis player now than in 2005."

Earlier, Guillermo Coria, a former Argentine, defeated Belgium's Christophe Rochus, 6-2, 6-4.

In women's second-round play, Russia's Svetlana Kuznetsova and Nadia Petrova, the second- and fourth-seeds, also advanced in straight sets. Yuli Shvedova other results unavailed.

Extended Laura Granville beamed No. 27 Severine Bremond, 6-3, 7-6; Russia's Elena Likhovtseva upset second-seeded Olga Puchkova (2006), and 40th Melik Sear invaded Martina Hingis (24) in three sets. AP

Liang takes it; Lascuña top Pinoy

BENGAWAN—CHI na's Liang Wenchong posted the 18th hole to beat Malaysia's Gana Shenlin to meddo death playoff and win the Singapore Masters on Sunday.

The 28-year-old Liang's maiden victory outside China ensured he became the second Chinese to win on the European Tour, following Zhang Lianwei, who captured the same event in 2003.

Liang's final card with a 71 and 66 (tied fifth in a 71 to finish the $1.1-million four-point-and-team Tour event on 11-under 277, a stroke clear of Brendan's Dennis Tyree (71), who was alone in third after he missed a 20-foot birdie putt on No. 18 by inches.

Antonio Lascuña, started par 72 to be the best placed Filipino at 289, in a tie for 39th place with six others including overnight co-leaders Gary Lockerbie of Britain (80) and Japan's Shingo Katayama (73).

Fourteen-year Juan Miguel Yu holds 10th-ranked Richmond Tyrone Ravisloi (80), Anthony Wall (69) and 2006 champion Nick Dougherty (71), ended the tournament five in front at 279.

It was 46 an Freddie Jacobson to collapse the tournament closed out with an 8 over 42 and wound up in an eight-way tie for 30th at 289.

He missed from in front of single-Qua (72) 2003, who gave up his lead for a decent finish of 1 under 69, a stroke 69.

Gerard Rosales fired a 72 and was the second best Filipino at 288, good for a spot in a seven-man logjam for 39th.

Reuters

Bayron 7 shots off despite 69

JO BAYRON KONGNGED back with a three-under-par 69 but still shot no cigar in the Queensland's Sanctuary Cove Resort Hamilton, Australia, Saturday. Dodd, who followed up his opening 67 with a 69, signed his card at 136 with Simon Dyson (69), Stephen Gallacher (68) and Australia's Richard Green (68). Bayron was at 143 after a 74 Saturday. Both Michael Bhattacharjee (69, 72-2-141). The BP team stood 12 strokes off leaders Queensland in the team event with Nic Anthony Fernandez, who with Mike Angelo is comprised the other BCT-16 loaded BP squad, at six-four achieve under 426 while Augusto shot a 74 for 146 and a 288 total.

noking is dangerous to your health.

SPORTS

New prayers for Philippine basketball

BARE EYE

Beejah Trinidad

FAITH, DEAR FRIENDS, FOR HUMAN TO must unexpected places.

You know, just like rain.

Try this, for example: "All the people of the village decided to pray for rain to come. On the day of prayer, all were there. One boy came with an umbrella."

Based on that message, passed on by yesterday's text critic Richard Meth, there was no way for this kid with a pure heart to lose his way.

He did not have to wait for a minute.

+++

Unfortunately there's always the greater danger of Faith falling out there.

For example, the latest poll surveys show people's faith in the current regime continues to erode.

There is, based on the surveys, a chance and very far change.

So expect a lot of manipulations, moves, marathon shenanigans and arrests, in a bid to make things look good for the beleaguered government.

+++

At least, this is not the case for Philippine sports, particularly basketball.

After the international basketball federation (Fiba) lifted its suspension on PP basketball, there's the all-out move to put up a strong national team.

There's the frantic haste to recruit the mainstream with the hope of playing again in the Olympics.

But, come to think of it, aren't the prime movers behind the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas overlooking the essentials of rebuilding?

+++

Sorry, but this question had to be asked following the receipt of this message from Basebol:

"SILENCE. After the Fiba recognition and the national team hemorrhage, woda na. Nothing follows. We are in the dark, as are other regions regarding basketball plans and programs."

Thanks, Pardon this, but that was the busiest track.

Anyway, before we could fully wonder who the anonymous texter was, the cellphone beeped again: "That, regards Rudy Ancera, Basebol."

+++

Well, it's not that late actually. In fact, after sending that urgent message to a concerned supporter of the now national basketball body, we got this reply:

"Now, Inai, wala pang IRR (miscuite directed) who should've sent the Fiba communication to the provinces. Input they should hold the national amateur championship, to give provincial teams a chance to participate."

One concerned party said SBP bigwigs were scheduled for a planning meet in Tagaytay.

"There are nothing specific.

Name-ella the message was lost in the communication jungle.

One reason some PP basketball devotees have wanted to have faith.

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Brilliant Baguio

Pine City athletes rule Olympic Festival

By Jane Manaore

LA UNION'S Kristopher Wiz shows his way to the 100-meter breaststroke gold.

BAGUIO, (LOUIS SUN—BAGUIO CITY) came out empty-handed in aquatics but delivered the decisive punch in badminton to rule the Central Southern Luzon qualifying games of the 2nd Philippine Olympic Festival.

Victories in taekwondo yesterday provided ample breathing space for the Pine City host as they climbed the overall standings in final-day onslaught by La Union and Pangasinan in the pool.

Baguio struck for 12 gold medals in the combat sport, sustaining its triumphs in arnis, judo, tennis and archery, to cap the week-long festivities with 89 gold, 66 silver and 71 bronze medals.

Swimming produced eight gold medalists as 13-year-old Jessie Bling Lawsun of Bulacan and La Union's Paula Isabel Custodio, who both eclipsed the six-gold haul of Baguio's Anna Melissa de Leon in arnis.

Lawsun, who hails from Malolos, swept the gold medals in 1.5 events, riding the 100-meter freestyle, 100m backstroke, 400m individual medley, 1,500m free and 200x100m the four '13-'14 division.

The Bulacan State University high school freshman also topped the 50m free, 200m back, 100m fly, 200m breast, 200m butterfly, 200m free, 100m fly and 400m free in his age group.

"I'm tired but happy because this is the first time I won so many medals in one meet," said Lawsun in Filipino.

Custodio gained nine victories—in the 100m free, 100m back, 400m IM, 200m IM, 50m free, 100m breast, 200m back, 200m free and 200x4m free.

"I hope to swim well, too, in the Palaro," said Custodio, 12, from St. Louis College in San Fernando, La Union.

Willowwright Jet Mark Mable Rico and middleweight Jerwin Pecson triumphed for Baguio in the senate division while Jessica Ann Bacsa emerged best chair in the junior women's middleweight class.

Daniel Rivera, Ivan Hiter Tiadoc and Benjamin Keith Soaleman proved superior in grade school while Philline Santiago, Dominik Alucat and April Salmon shone in the girls' bracket.

Other taekwondo jins who sparkled for Baguio were featherweight Fernand Delfin and welterweight Francis Bandonin in the mid-junior class and flyweight Patricia Gaines and batman Ayn Tiadoc in the women's mid-junior group.

"We never really expected to perform well because most of our athletes are new," said Baguio City tourist Rolando Bautista Jr. of his charges who also entered eighteenmen two weeks ago.

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Ford Nat'l Team Shootout tees off

FORD: From left, Hinge Inquirer Publications SVP and GM Paul Vincent Bermudez, VIP president David O. Valdes, Ford AVP Glen Dasig, FedGolf auditor Porfirio M. Flores, and FedGolf corporate secretary Teofilo C. Abejo fill the hands after signing the agreement.

FOUR OF 27 MEMBERS OF THE FEDeration of Golf Clubs Inc. (FedGolf) kicked off club-level tournaments on Saturday for the right to advance to next month's regional satellite competition in the 2007 Ford National Team Shootout.

Filling off the competitions were Sta. Elena Golf and Country Club, Manila Golf Club, Negros Occidental Golf and Country Club, and Iloilo Golf and Country Club.

The three-month long tournament of Bridgestone Tires and Ford Group Philippines, FedGolf and Golf Digest Phils. Magazine, the country's first comprehensive golf magazine published by Hinge Inquirer Publications, signed the agreement for the holding of this year's event.

Club-level tournaments will also be held at Alta Vista from today to Wednesday; Bacolod on March 16, Royal Westchester, The Orchard and Mt. Malarayat on March 17; The Orchard and Camp John Hay on March 18; Cebu Country Club on March 20; Alabang Country Club, Riviera, Sherwood Hills, Stone Hills, Puerto de Oro and Canlubang on March 20; Manila Southwoods and Splendido on March 23; Tanduay on March 28; Valley Splendido, Tagaytay Highlands and Tagaytay Midlands on March 31; Eagle Ridge on April 1; and Wack Wack on April 12.

Tournaments at Avida Greenfields and Baguio Country Club will also be arranged.

Winners in the club-level stage will advance to the regional satellites in April and May. Top finishers in regional satellites will compete in the grand finals slated May 31 at Tagaytay Highlands and on June 1 at Tagaytay Midlands.

Peñalosa spars 12 rounds, ready for WBO champion

FORMER WBC SUPERFLYweight champ Gerry Peñalosa opened his 12 rounds against Mexicana Saturday, then declared himself in perfect shape for his title fight with WBO superbantam king Daniel Ponce De Leon.

The grueling session was Peñalosa's last before he ventures to Las Vegas on Monday for the fight. He will be joined by the six-hour hard trip to Nevada by Dindo Gibi, who is seeing action in an eight-round rumble with Colombian Clemente Andrade.

Peñalosa and Gibi are in the undercard of the Marco Antonio Barrera-Juan Manuel Marquez WBC superbantamweight duel dubbed "Fearless."

Supervising yesterday's sparring session at the Wild Card Gym were Jessie Tamsan and Shacks Boby, who are overseeing the Filipino's preparations in the absence of celebrated trainer Freddie Roach, who is in Puerto Rico training Oscar De La Hoya.

Roach, though, will be at the corner of both Peñalosa and Gibi, two fighters he also manages. Inferno L. Laguardia, Contributor

BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo • Assistant Editor Corrie S. Mariano

SM unveils mammoth tourism project

Batangas property twice the size of Macau

By Dante L. Lucas

SM INVESTMENTS CORP. (SMIC), the holding firm of mall tycoon Henry Sy Sr., has entered the booming tourism business with a massive real estate development aimed at what the firm says is a "$1-billion-a-year industry".

The listed firm said it would formally launch next week in Manila Grant project in Batangas province, which it described as a "first-of-a-kind development."

"This pioneering effort will complement our two independently successful

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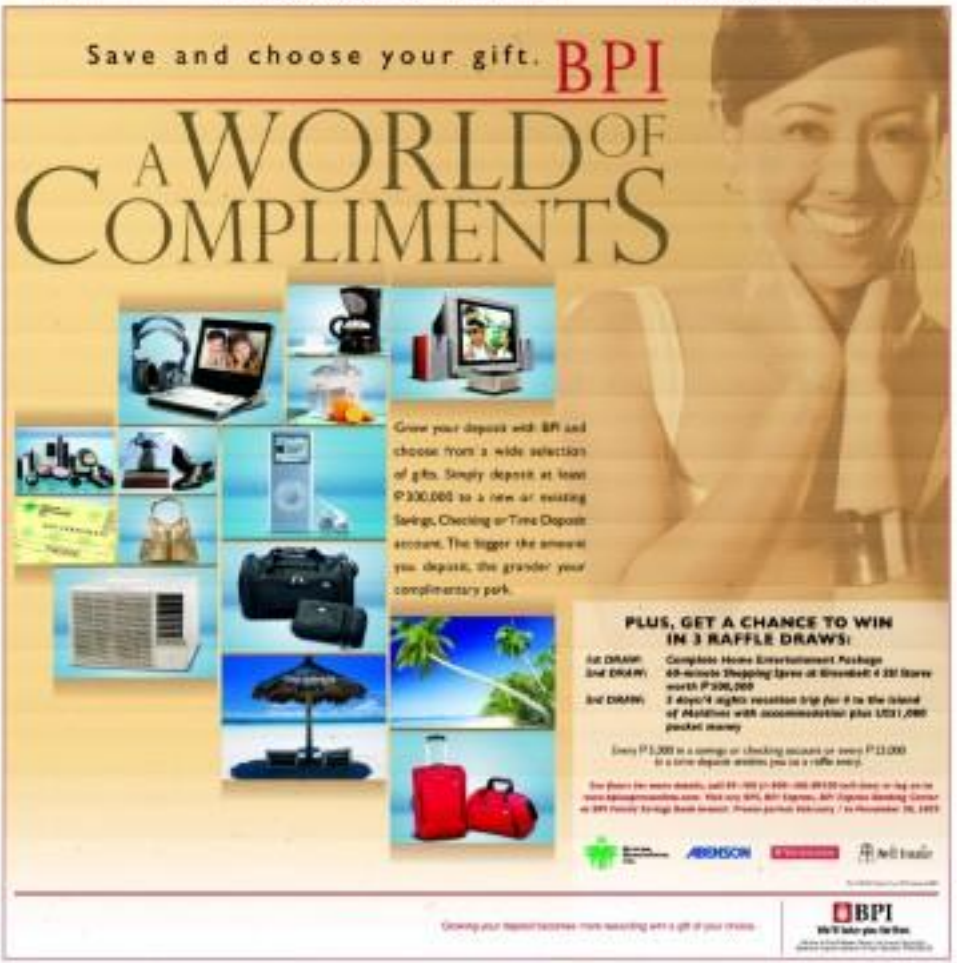

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Karaoke economics

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

ARMAGNAC BUI YAMAZAKI OF JAPAN has done it again. For the last three annual sessions of the Philippine Development Forum (still known to old-timers as the annual donor pledging session, though it's much more than that now), he has provided humor and wit to liven up the otherwise staid and formal proceedings.

This year's session was held in the city of Cebu, a welcome opportunity for most participants to see for themselves what the city had to offer to the delegates to the recent Asean meetings—including the infamous P500,000 banquets of recent vintage. Business from the several hundred delegates to the PDF must have helped somewhat to compensate the hotels for the supposed losses incurred from the postponement of the Asean financial meeting last December.

Empty orchestra

Absent from this year's proceedings were the economist jokes that Ambassador Yamazaki and others had spiced up the dismal mess with in the last two sessions in Tagaytay City and Subic City (featured in this column in SOL, April 3, 2005).

But the good ambassador was not about to disappoint. To top his substantive contributions to the PDF deliberations, he left the group with a rather apt analogy describing what the PDF was all about. The analogy was built around the karaoke, which he said could very well be the most popular Japanese word in the world today. The word "kara," he explained, means "empty" in Japanese. "Karaoke," for example, gets it meaning from "kara" and "oke" (kauki)—implying empty, hombol or unarmed combat. "Oke" is a diminutive for the Japanese word for "orchestra." Thus, karaoke denotes in essence, literally from "empty orchestra," or orchestra music without the song or vocals.

And that, he declared, was what the PDF was all about. The donors are there to provide the background music of the orchestra—via their resource support, but it is still up for the country, especially the government, to provide the song.

More songs

In last week's PDF discussions, the donors pointed out that there remain many songs to be sung.

All welcomed the considerable progress made on the fiscal front, particularly in achieving a much smaller than-planned national government deficit last year. But even as the donors welcomed the long-awaited reversal of the continuous slide in tax effort (remember, ratio of tax revenues to GDP) since 1997, some concern was expressed that the improved fiscal balance was also attained through expenditure compression.

The compression in expenditures was largely the effect of last passage of the 2006 budget—a "blessing in disguise," as Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. termed it. Nonetheless, it is to be noted that even based on the proposed budgets submitted by the Executive branch to Congress, the allocated levels of education, for example, had dropped conspicuously from almost 20 percent in 1997 to less than 14 percent in 2006. Like the slide in the tax effort, this has finally been reversed, with the 2007 budget providing about 14.4 percent to education.

Scope for more

While the above speaks of the need and scope for more public investments, the government's low level of investments especially from the private sector was a concern noted not by the World Bank and other participants lamentingly, the investment ratio (i.e. to GDP) had fallen since 2000, despite rising fiscal incentives through the same period. The World Bank also pointed out that contrary to conventional wisdom, our corporate income tax is relatively low compared to our neighbors. There is clearly so much more singing we need to do to spur investment.

The Department of Finance unveiled a program to boost tax effort by at least 2 more percentage points, thereby bringing it back to levels already attained in the 1990s. The good news is that most of the targeted 2 percentage points will be pursued through improved tax administration, rather than new tax measures. The main tax measures to be pushed in the 14th Congress will be limited to the rationalization of fiscal incentives—a area around P40 billion estimated to be lost annually to redundant incentives—and a restructuring of the income tax to enhance tax compliance.

Repertoire

The PDF discussions pointed out the great scope for further improving collection efficiency. For example, there is wide discrepancy between the number of new motor vehicles registered by the Land Transportation Office (LTO) every year, and the number of newly manufactured and officially imported vehicles reported. Much tax evasion can be curbed by using information that can be shared more freely among government agencies (e.g. LTO, SEC, BIR and LGUs). Key executive branch suggested amending the CDA charter to give the constitutional body the authority to audit not only expenditures, but government revenue collections as well. In the end, the group agreed that there are many more areas that can be easy to improve tax and collection efficiency. Both BIR and Customs have lined up their respective repertoire on this for the years ahead.

By all means, let's give them all the soloist they need to sing their songs well!

Comments are welcome at chabito@yahoo.com

SM unveils . . .

From page B1

industries—restaurants and real estate—to create a groundbreaking development hub with the potential to put local economists on the global radar. Internet and propel the country forward," the firm said.

In a separate interview, SMIC vice president for investor relations Corazon Eulalio said the project would dwarf the Punta Fuego residential resort development, which sits adjacent to the SM property in Batangas, Batangas.

"Punta Fuego is 80 hectares," she said. "Manila Gate will have a total of 5,000 hectares."

Earlier company statements said that the SM group would initially spend P2 billion for the development.

Eulalio said the entire project would be "twice the size of Macau," referring to the Chinese special administrative region that is also a gambling and tourist mecca.

She think there's a huge potential in the tourism industry," Eulalio added.

The SMIC official said that Manila Gate would be launched in phases, with the first phase to be unveiled to the public on March 31.

She added that the project would be a mixed-use complex with residential, resort level, and retail components.

Other details of the project, like the company's partners and their target markets, would be disclosed during the official launch, Eulalio said.

The company recently said that it has allocated a total of P20 billion this year for capital expenditures on various projects. It recently borrowed $100 million from foreign and local creditors through five-year convertible bonds and loan repayments.

On the Philippine Stock Exchange, shares of SMIC ended Friday at P250 a share, unchanged from the previous day's level. Trading was heavy with P341.7 million worth of shares changing hands.

Chemrez to sell carbon credits

By Abigail L. Ho

COCO-BUSINESS, producer Chemrez Technologies Inc. stands to earn some $3.5 million from the sale of at least 100,000 tons in carbon credits from the year to 2012.

Chemrez Tech chief Business officer Noreen Celing said the company had signed an agreement with Investor Asset Management Corp. covering the sale of carbon credits that would result from the sale of its Biotrim coco-biodiesel product.

Carbon credits, based on how much carbon dioxide emission will be saved from the use of renewable energy, now sell for around $7 a ton in the world market.

Under the Kyoto Protocol, of which the Philippines is one of the 155 signatories, firms that invest in renewable energy will earn carbon credits that can be traded for funds.

Celing said the estimated 500,000 tons in carbon credits was based on a "conservative" estimated consumption of 20,000 tons of coco-biodiesel.

He said Chem. unfuels would eventually seek carbon credits for the use of its coco-biodiesel product by non-automotive engines, such as ships and power plants.

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Luzon gets ₱220B in infra deals

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer General Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—AT LEAST 10 new projects worth P220 billion have been added to the Luzon Urban Beltway super region.

This increased the total infrastructure investments in three regions to P320 billion, said DTI chief Peñalosa Pestanas.

Pestanas said the additional projects being coordinated by the LUB are the Clarin Bataan-Bontoc Luzon Supergateway; Gate Bataan, Cavite-Laguna (Cala) South-SLEX (Stage 3), Dr. Lakandula Superhighway, North Luzon East Expressway (NLEX), Southern Tagalog Arterial Road (Star) 1, Edsa Rehabilitation Project, Southlink Project Phase 1-A, LRT Line 1 Nala Connector, MRT 7, and the MRT/LRT Angat Water Utilities Improvement.

He said Secretary Cerge Remonde, chief of the Presidential Management Staff, had informed him that the LUB would oversee these new projects, which leaders in the private sector identified during the National Competitive Summit in October last year.

These brought to 23 the total projects being coordinated within the LUB, which cover Central Luzon, Metro Manila, Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon) and Mimaropa and Occidental and Oriental Mindoro.

The LUB accounts for 35 percent of the country's gross domestic product, home to 36 percent of the national population and 39 percent of the total labor force.

The 15 projects now under the LUB represent the bulk of the P372-billion budget earmarked for all five super regions.

Pestanas stressed the public of "full transparency" and that the projects were being subjected to the "very least care in the government."

"Our task is to orchestrate and fast-track the delivery of these projects. We're getting all the implementing agencies and stakeholders together to work as one to ensure the immediate completion of the projects," he said.

He alleged the fears of the group Edsa Beware in Mass that the mid-term elections would delay the P6.4 billion Light Rail Transit (LRT) 1 North Extension project that links the railway to the Metro Rail Transit (MRT).

President Macapagal-Arroyo had given clear instructions to have the LRT/MRT link finished before 2010, he said.

The 3.4-kilometer link will connect the MRT and LRT lines in Metro Manila.

Gov't approves 10 new projects

Gov't brings back Investment Ombudsman

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—THE GOVERNMENT has reactivated the Office of the Investment Ombudsman to help cut bureaucratic red tape, which is hindering the growth of investments in the country.

Trade Secretary Peter Favila said here recently that the office was reactivated in response to the clamor of businessmen and investors to make it easy for investors to do business, especially at the local level.

The office was created under the administration of deposed President Joseph Estrada but was abolished when the present administration took over.

Favila said the office would oversee graft charges against government officials accused of blocking investment activities.

He said that with the office incident, the government hopes to attract more investments given the renewed confidence in the country's economy.

The investment confidence mission will also provide advice on various investment and business laws, rules and regulations and facilitate the processing of investment-related requirements.

Favila had also announced here that government agencies have put up an investment promotion fund to help local entrepreneurs, especially those engaged in small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The fund will allow exporters to get the financial assistance they need to boost their competitiveness in the international market.

Favila said the fund would be used for product design, marketing and other programs.

He said the DTI and the Department of Finance (DOF) fixed P100 million each to the fund.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas put in an initial contribution of P50 million, the National Economic Development Authority gave P20 million and Philippine Exporters Confederation, P30 million.

Favila said these measures would help sustain the economic growth rate recorded last year.

The country's gross national product (GNP) grew 6.2 percent, the gross domestic product grew by 5.4 percent last year.

The GDP refers to the total value of goods and services produced in the country, while the GNP includes income from abroad, such as remittances.

Biofuel source making a strong comeback

By Frank Cimatu
Inquirer Northern Luzon

TUBA, BENGUET—A LARGELY IGNORED biofuel source is making a comeback after a tobacco trader here decided to develop it as a refuel source for fine cutting farms.

Matthew Dilong, executive vice president of Tuba Heights Inc., said he was intrigued by the petroleum nut (Pittosporum resiniferum) or bungo, a wild aromatic tree endemic to the Philippines, after a visit to an area near Mt. Mayon in Albay.

He said children there were playing with the nuts and extracting oil from them.

The Ifuntu, especially from the unripe fruits, was intense.

"It was like diesel," Dilong said.

The Dilongs bought some saplings of the petroleum tree and planted some in Barangay Tabaan Norte here, where they maintain a demonstration farm planted to premium Virginia tobacco.

TMI plans to plant 30,000 bungo trees in Tuba within the year.

The tree can grow up to 30 meters but already bears fruit when it reaches a height of six meters.

According to the "Handbook of Energy Crops" by James Duke, the bungo's genus is caffeo. Resin contains dihydroxyacetone, which is used for parfumes and medicines, and bungo wax, a component of gasoline.

Residents cited by Duke said that a tree could yield 80 cubic centiliters of oil through squeezing. When the residue is ground and distilled, it could yield another 75 cubic centiliters of oil.

As it turned out, the bungo needs no introduction to the Cordillera because it grows abundantly in the region.

Bungo is known here as quinay, aleki and lungo and is more popular for its medicinal properties, and not as a potential fuel source.

Cordillerans hasten use the fruit to loosen and stomach pains while the sharpish (a mixture of essential oil and resin) is said to cure leprosy and other skin diseases.

Sitel scouts for new sites

By Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—THE BUSINESS PROCESS outsourcing industry is expected to be the country's third largest foreign exchange earner in three years.

Emcido Reyes, country manager of the merged Client Logic Philippines and Sitel Philippines, said the government had acknowledged that the BPO industry was growing and would likely become the third biggest source of foreign exchange after the semiconductor industry and overseas Filipino workers.

Reyes, who is also president of the Business Process Association of the Philippines, said the industry expects to earn a combined $1.2 billion and employ a million people by 2010.

Reyes also said that the merger between Client Logic and Sitel was a consolidation to the ground floor of the growing BPO industry.

The merger took place in January and the company has started construction of a facility at the Baguio City Economic Zone, which will house the combined workforce of 6,000 employees.

The new Sitel is scouting for new satellite sites in the Visayas and Mindanao, Reyes added.

Client Logic set up its operations at the Baguio City Economic Zone in 2000, where firms from many Philippine Inc. pioneered in 1980, despite resistance from the firm's latest foes and Filipino leaders, Reyes said.

In less than six years of operation, Client Logic and most BPOs managed to generate combined revenues of $1.6 billion, Reyes said.

TVI to step up mining activity

By Ryan D. Rosauro
Inquirer Mindanao

ISPOLOG CITY—CANADIAN MINING OUTFIT TVI Pacific Inc. is stepping up its copper and gold exploration activities in Zamboanga del Norte following the "positive results" of the surface tests.

TVI said in a statement that the two sites that attracted teams of a new copper and gold prospect were the Tapias and Tanaweb areas of Jose Dalman town.

TVI president and chief executive officer Clifford James said "the company plans to pursue the Tanaweb and Tapias resource applications on a priority basis."

Based on the survey, mineralized deposits were detected in an area about 12 square kilometers in size.

TVI said the results were "encouraging" and that they indicated a possible extensive copper-gold system in the area.

Exploration activities in Tanaweb and Tapias began in March 2006.

Commenting on the recent findings, James said "follow-up drilling is required to enable us to assess the continuity of the mineralization in all directions, and to enable us to start getting a handle on the potential of these areas."

Rochelle Gamboa Hilario, TVI's media relations officer, said a more detailed geological survey of the two sites were scheduled this year.

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REGISTRATION FORM

Japanese firms rank RP low as investment site

Cite weak legal system, rising wages, IPR violations

By Ruzzel W. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES ranked second-lowest among 10 countries across the globe in which Japanese firms planned to transfer or expand their activities in the next three years, according to the latest poll by the Japan External Trade Organization.

Results of Jetro's survey on International Operations of Japanese Firms also showed that respondents thought the Philippines was the richest place in Asia to do business in in terms of political and social instability, with 52.5 percent of those polled saying so.

Japanese firms believed the Philippines was less stable than Indonesia (50.6 percent) and China (41.3 percent). Respondents rate Singapore as the most stable location in Asia, with only 0.8 percent disagreeing.

Jetro said in a statement the yearly survey was last conducted in November and December 2006, receiving replies from 729 firms or 20.7 percent of the 3,537 companies sent questionnaires.

Those were polled on their international and domestic operations, plans to expand business to China, business environment in Asia, non-trade opportunities in the Asia-Pacific region, including those with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations — only the latter group as well as its members said sales changes.

The percentage points for each market — a report, country or territory — were calculated based only on the number of respondents operating there. In the Philippines, 177 firms took part in the survey.

Other respondents were spread out in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, India, United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and locations classified collectively as "Others."

Jetro found that among the eight Asian destinations, the Philippines (20.9 percent) was the second-lowest after Indonesia (20.6 percent) in terms of the ease of doing business with local companies.

It was also the second-lowest in terms of the ease of finding qualified employees after Indonesia, with 7.8 percent and 6.9 percent, respectively.

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Of the respondents based here, 13 percent said there were problems with the protection of intellectual property rights.

In terms of underdeveloped infrastructure, the Philippines (32.2 percent) was better off only when compared to India and Vietnam.

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P540-M rights offering of EEI gets SEC approval

By Dawn L. Lucas

CORPORATE RELEASE/NO LEAD APPROVED

The plan of construction firm EEI Corp. to raise P540 million in fresh funds through a stock rights offer.

In a statement to the Philippine Stock Exchange, EEI president Bobot Jose Castillo said the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) approved on June the prerequisite offer of 120 million new EEI common shares with a par value of P1 at the subscription price of P4.50a share.

"The firm is optimistic about the success of its fund-raising exercise given the local stock market's continued positive overall prospects," he said.

The offer period for the stock rights began last Friday, March 9, and will run until March 22, the company said. BDO Capital Corp. has been hired as the issue manager and lead underwriter for the company's stock rights offer.

Under the scheme, the shares will be issued from the authorized and unissued capital stock and will be offered to shareholders of record as of March 8.

They will be entitled to subscribe to one share for every 7 AZAT common shares held. With the offering of 120 million new shares, the firm's outstanding number of common shares will increase to 1.84 billion after the completion of the exercise.

According to EEI, the proceeds of the offering will be used to retire existing bank debt and finance working capital requirements.

The company expects to net an estimated P520.9 million from the rights offer after deducting listing fees, taxes and other related fees and expenses.

EEI said it has allocated P202.9 million from the net proceeds for working capital for the Cotabato Indo-Mining project of Japan Asia Group (JAG) in Sta. Silva, Palawan, the petro fluid asphalt cracker (FCC) project of the Petron refinery in Bataan under Pacific of Korea and the Shangri-Land Towers owned by Bank Properties.

"The three projects, which had been awarded last year, are estimated to cost P2.34 billion," the company said in a statement.

EEI is undertaking civil, structural, electromechanical and piping works for the Sta. Ysabel mining and refining project for the second refining facility of Coral Bay Nickel. It was also involved in the construction of the hot oil's fluid catalytic unit at the Sta. Silva complex.

Meanwhile, the $23-million Petron FCC project involves revamping, civil, building, electro-mechanical and installation works for the Petron refinery complex in Limay, Bataan. The asphalt cracker facility is part of the process of petroleum refining.

EEI also serves as the general contractor for the Wang Grand Tower, which is composed of two 60-storey towers, which when completed will be the country's tallest buildings.

The company under both civil and foundation works while structural construction is underway for the two buildings. It will also undertake architectural finishing and fit-out works.

The balance of P518 million from the rights offer's proceeds will be used to partially retire outstanding working capital loans.

Sun Life says mutual fund sales hit ₱2.6B in end-Feb.

THE GLOBAL MUTUAL FUND UNIT OF INSURance giant Sun Life Financial reported a sharp rise in sales in the first two months of 2007 despite the lackluster year-to-date performance of the stock market.

In a statement, Sun Life Prosperity Funds (SLPF) said it posted sales of well over P2.6 billion at the end of February, which already accounts for approximately 45 percent of its total mutual fund sales made last year.

The solid sales came as the stock market hit highs last experienced before the onset of the 1997 East Asian financial crisis, but corrected sharply afterwards after a sharp sell-off in the main Chinese bourse triggered jitters in equities markets around the world.

"It is truly remarkable how our buyer emerged in one way ahead of our sales pace this year compared to last year considering some of the minor ripples that hit the market recently," SLPF president and CEO Henry Joseph Herrera said.

"If you recall, as of September 2006, we made it to the number two spot in terms of net-realized gross sales," he added. "And by all indications, we are optimistic that we will outperform our sales performance last year."

It remains unclear, however, how the recent sell-off in stocks will affect the sales of Sun Life, in particular, and the country's nascent mutual fund industry in general.

As of the latest data, Sun Life now has P13.5 billion in assets under management, which is 33 percent higher than the end-2005 level (-0.9% y-o-y).

The year-on-year net return on the Prosperity Funds have so far beat the market's average performance. Its equity fund so far leads the pack with a net after tax return of 47 percent.

Its balanced fund, consisting of both fixed income and equities, came in second with a yield of 33 percent, while the government income fund generated a net after tax return of 12 percent. Its bond fund, meanwhile, delivered an 11 percent return.

"We have never experienced anything like this before and we are enthusiastic about the future of the Prosperity Funds," Herrera said. "Filipinos are getting more and more attuned to the idea of investing. By taking on some risks as compared to traditional investment instruments, return-on-mutual funds can be substantially higher."

The Sun Life Prosperity Funds are managed and distributed by Sun Life Asset Management Co. Inc., a member of the Sun Life Financial group of companies.

Dawn L. Lucas

Analysts expect trading activity to weaken this week

THE LOCAL STOCK MARKET WOULD LIKELY continue to consolidate this week after the share price volatility it experienced over the last two weeks, market watchers said.

The next few months could also prove to be a roller coaster ride for stock investors as the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE), according to AB Capital Securities Inc.

"We believe that a period of consolidation after a very volatile couple of months is both to be expected and healthy," it said in a research note to clients. "Locally we don't see investors making anything meaningful."

The PSE index ended the last trading week at 3,099.02 points, a 1.2% percent decline from the previous week's 3,140.34 points.

Average trading activities have also declined to P4.8 billion a day down 23.7 percent from P6.2 billion the week before.

Historically, a period of consolidation is preceded by declining value turnover as new investors become more hesitant to jump in while existing investors become equally hesitant to liquidate their positions.

According to AB Capital, the local stock market would not be helped by developments abroad.

"Global stock markets are staging their most recovery rally of late after a reasonable sell-off," the broker said. "However we don't think this would translate to a return of our bullish steps in the short-term."

Instead, we see markets moving sideways, building a new base that will support a renewed advance later on (a year," AB Capital predicted.

Abacus Securities Corp. urged its customers to adopt a "sell on rally" strategy because of strong resistance near the 3,300- and 3,500-point levels.

Dawn L. Lucas

Power rate cut a boost to RP investment drive

American ecozone firms seen to expand operations

By Abigail L. Ho

THE GOVERNMENT'S RECENT MOVE TO fail has reduce power rates in economic zones will prompt American investors already present in the country to expand their operations and encourage others in the business here, according to the American Chamber of Commerce (Amcham).

In a letter to President Macapagal-Arroyo, Amcham executive director Robert Ingersoll said the country's relatively high power rates had been one of the biggest deterrents to the entry of new American investments into the economy.

"The high price of power in the Philippines has made it more difficult to attract new investments to the Philippines, as power some of our longstanding investors have chosen not to expand their business of power prices," he said.

He said investors, not only from the United States but also from other countries, had always stressed the importance of competition in the energy sector and power rates in keeping their current firms' confidence in their Philippine operations.

"Which was why, he said, the Amcham was "excited" about the government's recent move to reduce electricity costs for manufacturing business within economic zones.

The Philippine Economic Zone Authority, through a department of justice legal opinion, has been given regulatory power over power firms operating within economic zones.

Pesa director general Lilia de Lima earlier said this legal opinion removed power companies operating within economic zone from the jurisdiction of the Energy Regulatory Commission.

This should redound to faster approvals of petitions and help reduce power rates to make manufacturing plants in the zones more globally competitive.

Ernst said this should help encourage foreign firms to more seriously consider setting up shop in the Philippines.

"The benefits of this DOJ opinion, he said, would be far reaching.

"We thank you for responding to this recommendation of the business sector. Assuredly through expanding the applicability of the regulatory authority of Pesa to all economic zones so that the benefits of lower power prices can be enjoyed by many more of our member manufacturing, service and legacy firms," he said.

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Barclays sees peso hitting 46:$1 by end of '07

By Doris C. Dumlao

GLOBAL INVESTMENT BANK BARCLAYS Capital sees the peso sustaining its uptrend to hit 46 to a dollar by the end of the year, despite election-related pressures and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' liberalization of capital outflow restrictions.

Nicholas Bibby, macro strategist at the 60-based investment bank, said in a commentary dated March 1 that the BSP would take fairer route to cut its overnight policy rate by 50 basis points to the second quarter, but would likely reverse the course and begin to tighten monetary policy toward the end of the year to protect its 2008 inflation target.

The BSP has set an inflation rate goal of 4 percent for 2008. Having modified its easing stance to allow more leeway to emerging inflation and managing consumer price stability, the mid-point inflation target range implies a wider range of 2.5 percent to as much as 6.5 percent goal for 2007.

Bibby said the monetary tightening would be achieved by scrapping the easing system and moving back to a single overnight deposit rate of 7 percent, from the current 7.5 percent.

Since Nov. 2, the BSP has been offering under the easing system an interest rate of 7.5 percent only for the first P5 billion of a bank's overnight money; 5.5 percent for placements in excess of P5 billion up to P10 billion; and, 3.5 percent for anything in excess of P10 billion.

But in the face of emerging Asia, the Philippines has seen a marked rise in its balance of payments surplus over the last 12 months alongside a build-up in its foreign reserves to record highs, Bibby noted.

"Apart from letting the peso appreciate, the BSP's solution has been to introduce a three-tiered overnight deposit rates for commercial banks in order to lower the cost of this excess liquidity on its balance sheet. The BSP also announced the liberalization of capital account transactions for domestic institutions," the Barclays economist said.

Starting April 1, commercial banks can multiply foreign exchange for their own account equivalent to 20 percent of unimpaired capital or $50 million, whichever is lower. Before this, the allowable net position is much lighter at 2.5 percent of unimpaired capital or $5 million.

The BSP has also raised the outward investment limit for domestic companies without requiring its permission to $1 million-but $6 million, while purchases of dollars by individuals for non-commercial purposes, including offshore travel, will likewise be expanded to $10,000- from $5,000.

Bibby said the local currency was supported by the strong external payments position, largely due to the widening current account surplus that was boosted by robust remittances from overseas workers.

"Despite the possibility of a correction in the run up to May's mid-term congression al elections, we believe that the peso will continue to appreciate on a trend basis to hit 46:$1 by the end," he said.

But the economist said the strong domestic liquidity caused by the rising current account surplus was not being recycled given the banking system's subdued lending activity over the last few years.

"This is due to a combination of the high levels of unspecified risks banks, weak domestic demand and the failure of the property market to fully adjust. Philippine banks have directed their excess funds toward the bond market, which has led to a general downtrend in yields," he said.

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Gov't support for MRT plan cited

CIVIC GROUP EDSA PARA SA MASA (EPSA) the support shown by various government agencies for the expansion and extension of the Light Rail Transit system along Edsa.

The group specifically lauded statements from the Department of Transportation and Communications, Light Rail Transit Authority and the Office of the Latest Urban Beltway supporting the increase in train capacity of Edsa Metro Rail Transit-3 and its connection to Light Rail Transit-1 in Caloocan.

The group earlier urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to implement plans for the Edsa MRT expansion and extension using the rapid rise in patronage and the need to link up the two systems.

The group earlier noted the efficiency and convenience of the Edsa MRT service but warned that the system might not be able to cope with the huge increase in daily ridership.

"We commend the DOTC for the effective management and operation of the Edsa but we have to admit it, there is a serious limitation in the present capacity of the system, the group said.

To a statement, the group said the interest expressed by the many agencies is undeniable. On occasion of the Edsa #007 "is a positive sign that the expansion of Edsa MRT constructions will be fulfilled in the near future."

RP exports to India rose by 38.7% in '06

By Rancel W. Domingo

THE COUNTRY'S MERCHANdise exports to India rose 38.72 percent to $134.5 million in 2006, amid efforts between New Delhi and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to evolve talks on a possible free trade pact.

Data from the Bureau of International Trade Promotion, an agency of the Department of Trade and Industry, show that industrial goods made up 66.4 percent of the total exports to India last year or $81.7 million.

Industrial manufacturers sent to this country included electronics, machinery, transport equipment, appurtenance and parts, metal products, construction materials, chemicals and related goods.

Consumer manufacturers came second at $37 percent of the total or $45.5 million in value or $24.7 million. These included garments, homewares, holiday decor, toys and dolls, fashion accessories, furniture, wood products, footwear, gift ware and similar items.

Resource-based products—including coconut and mineral products, seaweed and carrageenan, marble, textile fibers and non-metallic minerals—accounted for 8.3 percent of exports or about $10 million.

Processed and fresh fruits and mineral products were also shipped out, as well as some diesel-driven engines and generators."

Last January, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry said trade between the two countries was nurturing into a "vigorous pace," considering that two-way trade was now at about $750 million compared to $200 million in the past years.

PCCI said the Philippines-India Business Council, which held meetings in the run up to and in the wake of the Asean + India Summit in Cebu in January, would devise a long-term framework to step up trade.

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DOE to hold another contracting round in '07

Gov't hopes to award contracts in September

By Abigail L. Ho

ENCOURAGED BY THE HIGH INterest interest in the Philippine Energy Contracting Round (PECR) 2006, the Department of Energy expects to hold another contracting round for petroleum, geothermal and coal areas before the end of the year.

Energy Undersecretary Guillermo Balce said almost every block offered under PECR 2006 had at least one interested party with most of them having more than one potential investor.

"We want to hurry with the PECR so we can have another round right after this. We expect to award PECR 2006 contracts by September so we can have the next round immediately after that," he said in a recent interview.

Under the PECR 2006, interested investors could bid for the right to explore and develop nine petroleum blocks, 14 coal prospects and three geothermal sites located all over the country.

In petroleum exploration, the DOE has identified nine areas spanning 75,207.2 sq. km. for development, including Cagayan, Central Luzon, two blocks in Mindoro Cuyo, three blocks in East Palawan, Visayan Basin and Agusan-Davao.

In 2005, only four oil and gas areas were offered to prospective investors, two of which had yet to be formally awarded as these were still awaiting Malacañang approval.

For coal, the DOE is offering 14 sites with a total resource potential of 433 million metric tons (MT) for exploration, development and production.

Balce said in an earlier interview that each site would be composed of three blocks, with each block spanning 1,000 hectares.

These coal sites are in Quezon, Negros Occidental, Cebu, Surigao del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur, Agusan del Sur, Davao Oriental and Zamboanga Sibugay.

During the PECR 2005, no bidder qualified to get an operating contract for any of the seven areas offered.

For the geothermal areas, the DOE has identified three areas for exploration, development and direct utilization for power generation and other geothermal applications.

These areas, with a combined potential of around 130 megawatts (MW), are located in Biliran in Bohol, Biliran in Biliran Province and Silay-Patog in Compostela Valley.

The Philippines is the world's second largest geothermal power producer with a total installed capacity of 1,931 MW.

PHILIPPINE franchise Association chair emeritus Susan Lee (left) and Trade Undersecretary Zenaida Monsod congratulate President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as she received the Franchise Excellence Award-Gold at the Malacañang Palace in Manila. The President held off giving out the awards to this year's winners Hall of Fame Outstanding Franchise of the Year—Pancake House Restaurant (large scale category) and Jollibee Foods Corp. (medium scale); Franchise of the Year—SeaOil Philippines (retail category) and Bayo Hair International (service category); Filipino-Franchisee of the Year—Wilfredo Timoy (Manila); International Master Franchisee of the Year (large scale) Jollibee Foods Corp., and Franchisee of the Year Carolyn Ty-Francisco (Jollibee Alabang) and Ma. Theresa Lee (Pancake House Restaurant).

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SIMPLIFIED SYSTEM

Data center solution f

By Rax T. Olalondra

Hon PHILIPPINE AND GLOBAL Telecom Network Power have jointly developed a data center in a box or BCIB solution to simplify the establishment of data centers for small and medium enterprises.

The BCIB solution—which enables companies to put their servers, switches and related peripherals in one rolling rack—is distributed by Lemon International in the Philippines.

Company officials said in a briefing that the system was first launched in the Philippines and is aimed to make available to the mass of business data in a couple of months.

The new DCIB solution promises to reduce the complexity and time required when deploying IMM (main servers for any working environment, by taking care of the mission-critical physical infrastructure issues that they may typically face. It also promises more or less half of their horizontal space and half their vertical space compared to other racks.

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One of the "Greatest Cars" - 2006 Road & Travel Magazine

"Class 'C' Compact SUV Winner" - March 2007 - C! Magazine Editor's Pick

"SUV of the Year" - 2007 Autodeal Editor's Choice

"Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Midsize SUV" - 2006 Autopacific

"Top-ranking in the Standard Midsize SUV category" - 2006 AutoPacific Vehicle Satisfaction Awards (VSA)

HYUNDAI

Banks expect to earn big in home mortgage lending

BANKS EXPECT A BOOM IN THEIR HOME mortgage lending, as well as a significant upgrade of their asset quality following a recent Supreme Court ruling which ease foreclosure proceedings on real estate and chattel collateral.

Bankers Association of the Philippines president Ramon Isa, in a letter to Supreme Court Chief Justice Reynato Puno dated March 7, thanked the high court in smoothing the procedures in extra-judicial or judicial foreclosure of real estate mortgages.

"With the prospect of an early resolution of disputes arising out of foreclosure cases, I can anticipate a renewed lending interest, particularly in home mortgages," he said. "Real estate business is a strong impetus for growth in our economy."

In a move to hear ruling, the high court passed a resolution prohibiting the issuance of temporary restraining order or injunction against the foreclosure of a property based on claim that the mortgage has been paid or that the borrower has not been delinquent in his payments.

The high court said the applications for an injunction should be verified and supported by evidence of payment.

The Supreme Court also said that no TRO must be issued on complainant on loan interest— unless the debtor pays the mortgagee with interest of at least 12 percent per year on the principal obligation. — Doris C. Bautista

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"We believe the DCB solution is attractive to small- and medium-sized businesses in the Philippines, who are considering IBM blade deployments," IBM Philippines general manager Lawrence Chan.

"Many organizations in the Philippines will benefit greatly from the DCB solution, specifically designed with built-in power, cooling and management capabilities within a rack, for the rapid deployment of blade servers and all IT networking applications as they grow up to enterprise users competitively in the world market," said Emerson Philippines general manager Laurence Chan.

He said businesses were always facing real challenges arising from energy woes and SMEs would find the DCB particularly useful for cost-savings in data facilities with little or no air conditioning.

As for Latech, assistant vice president Jason Lee said the distributor's partnership with key vendors like IBM and Emerson "will ultimately benefit end-users and businesses in the Philippines."

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"Highest Ranked Compact Multi-Activity Vehicle" 2006 J.D. Power and Associates Initial Quality Study

"Best Small SUV Ownership Experience" 2006 Strategic Vision's Total Value Award (TVA)

"Highest Ranked in Small SUV Category" 2005 Strategic Vision's Total Quality Study

"Industry's Highest Quality All-New Model" 2005 J.D. Power and Associates Initial Quality Study

"Winner in the Compact SUV Category" 2005 AutoPacific Vehicle Satisfaction Awards

"Best New Crossover" 2005 Canadian Car of the Year Awards

"Best Sub-Compact Sedan" 2006 Car of the Year Philippines

"Best Small Car" 2006 Australia's Best Cars

"Most Dependable Sedan of the year" 2006 Road and Travel Magazine, USA

"The Executive Car of the Year" 2006 Business Standard Motoring, India

"Best Family Sedan" MotorWeek's 2006 Drivers' Choice Awards, USA

"Asia Pacific Ideal Vehicle Awards" 2006 Premium Mid-size Car

"Excellence for Automotive Safety" 2005 Popular Mechanics Magazine

Pag-IBIG sets another bond offer worth ₱700M

Proceeds will be used to acquire 50,000 housing units

Doris E. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT-OWNED HOME DEVELOPment Mutual Fund, popularly known as the Pag-IBIG Fund, will offer to retail investors P700 million in five-year bonds over the next few weeks—a follow-up to last week's oversubscribed auction where it sold P1 billion worth of bonds at a reward low coupon rate.

Pag-IBIG Fund's auction of "Mamalayan ng Bayan Housing Bonds" last March 7 generated P3.3 billion worth of tenders, nearly thrice the offering size, allowing the housing agency to issue the P1 billion five-year bonds at 6 percent per annum. The coupon rate was below the prevailing market benchmarks, and the lowest for any debt issuance by a government-owned and controlled corporation.

"The relevant response of the market to our retail housing bonds is overwhelming," Pag-IBIG president Romero Quimbo said. "Large private institutions like banks and pension funds/investors' providers funds were among our major investors."

He added that the latest issue "is a real citizens of investors' swimming trust in the Pag-IBIG Fund."

"We have been offering bonds to the market since 2000, all of which, I am pleased to say were oversubscribed," Quimbo said.

As of auction date, the secondary market rate for comparative five-year Treasury bonds was recorded at 5.02 percent.

But while the Fund has initially earned of the total issue size of P2 billion on the day of auction, the amount will be subject to a 35 percent "clawback," which means around 1700 million will still be offered during a limited retail period.

The "clawback" provision, an innovation by high yielding bond issuers in the 1990s, means that the issuer has the option to redeem a specified fraction of the original issuance at a specified date using proceeds from a new issuance.

The underwriters of the offering are state-owned banks Development Bank of the Philippines and Land Bank of the Philippines.

"Private individuals like Pag-IBIG members and overseas workers should not despair as we will also give them the opportunity to invest in the familiar-to-us Pag-IBIG Housing Bonds," Quimbo said.

The urge our members to quickly take advantage of the retail offering from March 14 to 20," Quimbo said. "Other developers and insurance companies who were not able to participate in the bidding will be entertained from March 19 to 20."

While institutional investors had to shell out hundreds of millions of pesos for the bonds to get a 6 percent yield on their investments, he said individual bondholders would get to enjoy the same income rate when they invest an amount as small as P10,000.

Pag-IBIG Fund is currently the country's leading source of shelter financing.

The fresh infusion of funds estimated at P35 billion for this year, including the P2 billion housing bond floatation, will help finance the acquisition of some 50,000 housing units worth an average of P600,000 each.

Quimbo said the fund-raising activity had chosen how the government and the private sector could work hand in hand in helping the country's housing problem.

"Government recognizes that it cannot do it alone," Quimbo said. "It needs to tap private sector funds. But task in government is in primarily provide a mechanism for fund sourcing that can be trusted by the private sector."

Vice President Noli de Castro, the government's housing czar, commended Pag-IBIG Fund for undertaking this innovative fund sourcing scheme.

"The issue housing bonds issue should help ensure the steady flow of funds for housing," De Castro said. "With Pag-IBIG Fund, the government will definitely be able to face the issue of homelessness head on."

As reported 2006, Pag-IBIG Fund's total assets amounted to ₱191.35 billion, up by 7.43 percent from the ₱178.16 billion level the previous year.

The Fund also chalked up its record-high net income of ₱7.7 billion last year.

BSP considers easing FCDU restrictions

FERNANDO

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS is studying a new proposal from the Chamber of Thrift Banks to ease restrictions on foreign currency deposit unit (FCDU) transactions.

In a briefing after the CTB's annual convention on Friday, BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said the banking regulator would consider allowing banks to invest in long-term foreign currency debt securities.

Under existing regulations, he said the FCDU units of banks should invest their liabilities with assets in the form of loans and securities that are readily marketable and carry short maturities.

"But the market has changed now," Tetangco said. "Even if it's a security with a cover of one year, it can easily be traded, bought and sold in the market. So, the idea of being able to invest to cover that's liquid enough can also be met by that, since there are securities with longer maturity but present easily trade it."

The Basel accord requires banks to match all foreign currency liabilities with various eligible assets of the same amount, to discourage over exposure to foreign currency risk.

Currently, the BSP allows only the following assets as eligible cover: cash in hand; cyber foreign currency deposits with the BSP; short-term foreign currency deposits with foreign banks; offshore banking units and other FCDUs; short-term foreign currency loans granted by the BSP except those classified by the BSP as bad; or uncollectible debts; investments in foreign currency denominated debt instruments, which are of short-term maturities and are readily marketable; foreign currency notes and coins on hand; foreign currency checks and other cash items; foreign currency swaps; foreign currency forwards receivables; and, government securities purchased under repurchase agreements.

Bloomfly, the BSP has also accepted a proposal from commercial banks to use all profitable hedging tools or derivatives positions as part of the 100-percent foreign exchange cover for the the foreign currency liabilities.

In this case, Tetangco said the BSP is now willing to allow banks to hold long-term securities as future cover.

"There's now active (local) trading and prices are regularly available from exchange, from a broker or a dealer, so we're studying this and it's really worth considering," he said.

During the CTB convention on Friday, newly elected president Alfredo Ang and the thrift bank sector, which is dominated by small and medium enterprises, would continue to support reforms to boost the banking system.

"We shall continue to support the legislation of banking or financial reforms that will strengthen the stability of financial sector," Ito said.

"We will also lay the groundwork for the establishment of a CTB training institute that will professionalize members and employees of thrift banks to provide degree course in thrift banking," he added.

Ito said the CTB would also work to allow more members to avail of guarantees from the private-owned Home Guaranty Corp. in order to consolidate more home mortgage lending.

Doris C. Bumlao

NTC sets rules on consumer protection

By Nina T. Globeradora

THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS Commission (NTC) has set draft rules for keeping data logs of subscribers' voice and non-voice traffic as part of an effort to boost consumer protection.

The tentative guidelines, which were released Friday, will be subjected to public hearings next month, the regulator said.

Under the draft rules, telcos should retain the origin, destination, date, time and duration of post-paid telephone services for two months. Similar data for pre-paid services will be kept for up to six months, or as requested by the NTC in connection with pending complaints.

Related consumer protection guidelines state that subscribers' data should be protected and that the subscriber should be given notice in emergency numbers in telecards charges.

Consumers may not be charged for any service that was not subscribed to or was interrupted through no fault of the subscriber. A subscriber can only be charged monthly fee rates, terms and conditions agreed upon by and for the right to opt out from any service without penalty within 30 days from the date of use.

Sms, to telephone, Internet, broadcast or cable service providers initiating changes may take effect against any subscriber without prior notice and unless allowed by applicable laws.

The NTC said all providers and users of telecommunications services will be covered by the rules. Service providers are required to designate at least one representative to provide essential information to the NTC in connection with pending consumer complaints.

The regulator added that the One Stop Public Assistance Center or OSPAC of the regulator's main office and regional offices will facilitate consumer complaints.

The hearing on its draft consumer protection guidelines will be held on April 13 at the NTC's main office in Quezon City. The hearing on the draft rules for data log retention will be held on April 12, also at the NTC's main office.

For more details, call The Property Forum Phils., Monday to Sunday, 7:00 A.M. to 7:00 P.M. • Tel. nos.: 534-8038 & 534-8964
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Executive Suites BUSINESS Monday

InfoTech

RP Muslim traders extend reach to Malaysia

Local firms should look at this market

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

TAWAU TRADER BARAKILA AJIR, from Jolo, Sulu, has built a comfortable life for herself selling ripe Philippine mangoes for cheaper 10 years.

Anchar Abdulil of Simunul, Sulu, on the other hand, has found his order as a cashier, while Hadji Alimin has found her fortune in selling cosmetics and whitening products over the past 20 years.

They are just a few of the estimated 150,000 Filipinos, the majority from Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Basilan, who now call Sandakan, a town in the north Bornean state of Sabah, their home.

The proximity and cultural link between the southern islands of the Philippines and Sandakan, Sabah, resulted in brisk trade between the two communities that has continued to flourish centuries after the first goods were exchanged.

That trade entered a new phase in 1994 with the formation of the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East Asean Growth Area.

BIMP-EAGA was set up to encourage trade, tourism and investment among the four countries, and one offshoot was the ease of shipping services between the two-born in hands of the Philippines and Sandakan.

Every Monday and Thursday, about 100 passengers from Zamboanga, Tawi-Tawi and Jolo board a 90-tonnin boat for the 12-hour trip to Sandakan, Malaysia, bringing with them hopes of better employment and trade opportunities.

Almost at the same time, another boat operated by Alonzo Shipping Co. leaves the port of Zamboanga for Sandakan, filled with passengers and loaded with their cargo of mostly personal cars and food products that are increasingly in demand in neighboring Malaysia.

It was not too long ago when travel and trade between Zamboanga, Tawi-Tawi, Sulu and Malaysia were restricted to undocumented crossings of wooden hull boats, putting the passengers and their cargo at constant risk of harassment and even incarceration because of lack of proper travel documents.

MUSLIM B2-3

EMMCA Joy of Alonzo Shipping prepares to leave Zamboanga for Sandakan, photo by Ramon Muzones

A CASE FOR LEASING

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Big pharma's bitter pill: Part I

A CASE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL irresponsibility?

The ironic indeed is the media shout-fest launched ago attempt by lobbyists in drug congressional debates—on a bill that might be allow "parallel importation" of patented drugs into the country was a public relations disaster to the Philippine pharmaceutical industry.

It was quite ironically damaging to Pfizer, the industry's giant without here walking on. It-bigot/scientist drug Norvasc is priced locally at almost 1.8 times the price in India and elsewhere. The Indian attempt by its lawyers to justify their client's angle: costly colossus pricing policies only make drugs remote for the unabashed antibodies found.

A few names clicks at Pfizer-now reveal a totally different picture of the world's leading pharmaceutical firm. Its homepage is brimming with eye-catching statements that reflect the company's high ideals.

For example, the company banners its commitment not only to discovering and developing innovative medicines—which it does admirably well—but also to "...promoting access to them in need around the world." From what is generally known about the firm's pricing tactics, these all sounds more like the usual catchy clichés and empty slogans that one typically finds in corporate vision statements.

Are the people who run Pfizer and the other pharmaceutical multinationals really the socially irresponsible and uncaring corporate managers they are perceived to be, or is there something more fundamental behind these companies' apparently loathsome pricing behavior?

Jaded business model

We believe that Pfizer's dilemma is not simply the result of irresponsible and unethical corporate behavior. That, we submit, is a rather simplistic assessment. Rather, it is the offshoot of a business model that has long become jaded and irrelevant.

Today's breakthrough drugs and medicines such as Lipitor and Viagra, are examples of what are collectively known as "information goods." They are typically costly to produce, but almost costless to reproduce.

This is true of many other products such as blockbuster movies, recorded music, published works and high-tech "handhelds" such as the iPod.

Pricing a product to maximize profits, as we explained in Economics 101, requires that the last unit sold should cover the additional cost of producing it.

However, when applied to information goods, the MC = MR principle usually leads to an unworkable situation where the price is smaller than the average cost of the product, which includes huge developmental costs spread over the patented life of the product.

Producing different versions of the product, priced to be "prisoner" and distributed in "high-end" markets, along with paperback editions intended for the less affluent and less fastidious. The iPod comes in different versions, each priced differently and intended for a specific market niche.

However, this pricing strategy is not applicable to most new drugs. Except for minor differences in packaging to suit local requirements, Norvasc can be dispensed in only one chemical formulation.

It is a case of "one size fits all" where developing many versions to the usual manner is not a feasible marketing strategy.

What multinational drug companies do is to segment markets by country where demand configurations and elasticity are estimated on the basis of socio-economic indicators and local regulatory constraints.

Here, the pricing what-the-market-can-bear strategy leads to what can easily be interpreted as "unfair and unethical."

One obvious way out of this dilemma is to reduce the huge developmental and promotional costs that have long characterized the industry. This is a lot easier said than done, however.

Changing tactics

To its credit, Pfizer seems to have taken the first gutsy steps in moving away from its long-held conservative ways.

The first indication of an impending strategic shift is it's choice of a new CEO in the person of Jeffrey Kindler. I looked up his name and went away impressed: Young, an academic record that is second to none (BA, Yale University; Juris Cum Laude), Doctor of Jurisprudence, Harvard (Magna Cum Laude), and professional credentials that are impeccable (Partner of the law firm Williams and Connolly, DOJ and General Counsel, McDonnell Corp.).

From what I have learned about him from other sources, he seems to be the person to lead the company—and perhaps the industry—into a different trajectory.

The same company website released recently by this article also seems to give signs of winds of change. In a link to "Where the Company is Headed," the following policy directions are cited:

- Contributing across business units to share learning from local and global partnerships.
- Reaching out to more stakeholders
- Seeking out partners willing to break out of the view that health care access is a zero-sum game.

In a sequel to this column, I shall attempt to explain how these and other latest developments by the drug industry that will move the beleaguered industry out of its current rut.

(The article reflects the personal opinion of the author and does not reflect the official stand of the Management Association of the Philippines. The author is active academic and a knowledge-manager consultant. Feedback at mapsec@globelines.com.ph)

MAPPING THE FUTURE

Dr. Nicolás S. Peñalosa

MOVEMENTS

New country head to lead CIGI and SIG

THE LIROS GROUP AYPON IS CURRING JORDAN TO LEAD ITS PROJECTS in the Philippines effective Jan. 1, 2007. After a buyout of the BOC Group (a 66-based company) in February 2006, The Linde Group, the world's largest industrial gas company based in Munich, Germany, now owns the country's leading industrial gas companies in the Philippines.

Linde Philippines Industrial Gases Inc. (with operations mainly in Luzon, and Linde Mindanao Industrial Gases Inc.) which operates in Visayas and Mindanao, will now be managed by Dennis Jordan as the first country managing director for Linde in the Philippines.

Jordan will spearhead the successful delivery of the two businesses' safety and financial targets in the business areas of bulk, packaged gas and healthcare. He will also be responsible for the implementation of the synergy potentials of annual and medium term plans and budgets which will meet the company's strategic objectives; maintain the necessary production capacity to meet identified customer requirements within defined cost and quality standards; and ensure that the company has the appropriate personnel and systems to monitor and control its operations effectively and achieve its financial targets.

Jordan will also be responsible for implementing regional functional initiatives to achieve local operational and commercial positions the highest in the country and further strengthen The Linde Group's business operations.

Prior to assuming his new position, Jordan managed Linde Malaysia as its general manager for The Industrial and Special products line of business in the Region. BOC organization in the Philippines from 2003 to 2006 capturing then a British national who was managing the business. Prior to that, he was assigned to two years in Sydney, Australia, on a marketing role from 2002 to 2004. Jordan is Raja will follow predecessor Peter Kienzl who is being transferred to Australia to lead the strengthening of CIGI and SIG's positions in the Philippines.

Jordan is just one of several key appointments in CIGI within the year. Last year, global gas companies Linde and The BOC Group combined its resources to create the industry's leading global player. Under the new umbrella organization of The Linde Group.

Setting up a listening post for consumers

NO BUSINESS PROVIDING PRODUCTS or services in a mass market can hope to survive and grow unless it earns the trust of consumers. To earn that trust, a successful business strives to build a continuing relationship with its customers, one that involves fulfilling their needs and wants. An important aspect of that relationship is, of course, listening to them.

The Stradic Care Center, an integral part of Stradic Philippines' customer services unit, plays a key role in this communication process.

"The care center is an important touch point through which we literally listen to the voices of our customers. It is also one of the many points of contact with our customers, the most preferred as of now is our telephone hotline number, 898 0000. Whether positive or negative, we welcome feedback from our consumers. We want them to share their feelings, concerns and views about us," explains Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Jerard Dan Santos explains.

The hotline is manned by representatives Monday to Friday, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Outside of these days and hours, the system is equipped to record messages from consumers. You notes that, while most contacts are received via the hotline, increasingly consumers are e-mailing their concerns to consumer.service@ph.stradic.com.

TESS Baron

The bulk of calls and e-mails from consumers consist of questions, suggestions and comments on product features and promotions. The information then goes to each consumer contact is entered into a Stradic proprietary system called Consoplus, which allows the data to be stored in the system for a number of years. All information is accessible online by consumer services personnel and the Stradic quality assurance laboratories.

Product complaints are handled with careful attention in addition to product complaints, Stradic adheres to an established procedure, which starts with a Stradic field representative visiting the customer's home to get the product being complained about. The retrieved product is then sent to the Stradic QA laboratory, which conducts a thorough analysis of the product in question to determine the cause of the reported problem.

"For Stradic to be able to conduct a complete and thorough analysis of the reported problem, the consumer must provide us with as much information as possible. Here is how to let the entire product, which includes its contents and packaging. It is here that we ask for the cooperation of consumers so that we can address complaints properly and promptly," Ben says.

The care center constantly trains its agents and field representatives. They are kept up to speed on new products, promotions, events and company developments.

RP Muslim traders extend reach . . .

From page B1-1

As such, trade and travel were limited and the full potential was never unleashed.

Good business sense

The creation of BIMP-Eaga and its promise of prosperity eventually made traveling in a shipping line between the two countries good business sense, according to Almon-vice president Nicholas A. Tan Jr.

Tan says in an interview that the shipping line resulted from a trip that his brother made to Malaysia in 1994 when BIMP-Eaga had just been formed.

His brother was part of the official delegation sent to Malaysia and he came home fired up with the idea of providing a shipping service.

"We were encouraged to support the trade links. We did, and the first trip to Sandakan was made in October 1994," Tan says.

He says the first trip was encouraging because he felt that Almon contributed to putting Zamboanga on the map because it was now doing direct and legal trips to Malaysia, making it a truly international port.

The 51-year-old Hji. Wahab is dead, chairman and president of 2000 Sea Ventures Inc., on the other hand, sees the trade potential between Zamboanga and Malaysia as early as 1974 when he engaged in barter trade.

Wahab says they became of the religious and cultural affinity between the people of Luzon-Visayas and Malaysia, particularly in Sabah and Sandakan, which were closer to Mindanao than the Philippines' capital of Metro Manila.

"You look to Sabah the same as you would to Zamboanga," Wahab says in an interview.

Shipping lines

Realizing that the growing Filipino community will be a good market for a transport service, Wahab established a line between Zamboanga and Sandakan in 2000.

He has each passenger ships are made in Malaysia and they are the only ones that make regular stops through Bongao, Tawi-Tawi and Jolo, both.

Wahab says he concentrated on a passenger service because many Filipinos from the islands regularly go to Malaysia to visit their relatives or to find work for themselves, mostly in the construction and factory lines.

Since there's no visa requirement, they can regularly go in and out of Malaysia provided they stay for a maximum of 10 days. Some do this for a week and then go back for another two weeks.

"They find a lot of employment opportunities in Malaysia because it is a richer country and it is usually their relatives who encourage them to go and work with them," Wahab says.

Almon's Tan and Hji. Wahab both say that the low travel tax between the two countries as part of the BIMP-Eaga agreement was also helpful to their operations.

BIMP-Eaga is being strengthened with help from the German Technical Cooperation.

Because it only cost the passengers P200 to travel tax to travel to Malaysia, it was easier for them to frequently board a ship and sail for Malaysia.

Wahab says that when the travel tax was just at P100, his ships would carry more than 1,000 people per trip. Tan marks the same sentiment for his ship.

Operations stopped last year when the travel tax skyrocketed to P2,000 because the memorandum of agreement putting the travel tax at just P200 expired.

Ticket sales quickly dropped and Wahab says the Customs ships were suddenly just bringing fewer than 50 passengers only.

Wahab says he has been busy with land to make the trip cost if there were just a few passengers, and a few kilos of cargo on board because it was a commitment.

"The travel tax was just too much. The passengers cannot afford it, because remember they are going to Malaysia for work. Only a few go there for purely trade," Wahab says.

Travel tax restored

Fortunately, the old travel tax rate was restored in August and the shipping companies are optimistic that passenger take-up will soon increase and maybe even surpass previous numbers.

Tan says the traffic would also receive a big

HRPS Arroza displays her wares at the Sandakan market. JAZMIN LAGMAY

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Francorp Philippines marks 10 years

TEN YEARS AGO, THERE PLspice entrepreneurs, Santos Lim, Stoney Siguenza and Bing Sibal Limbaco, went to the US to scout for opportunities that would help bolster the growth of local businesses. They found Francorp USA, a top US franchise consulting firm, inked a partnership with them and brought it into the Philippines to pioneer franchise development and also mark the growth of local businesses via franchising.

Francorp USA, with headquarters in Chicago, Illinois, and more than 35 offices worldwide, brings to the Philippines over 25 years of its experience in franchising and combined this with 58 years of solid retail business background of Lim, Siguenza and Limbaco. Thus, Francorp Philippines was born.

Over the years, Francorp Philippines has been helping Filipino entrepreneurs grow their business with the franchise formula and since then, have launched hundreds of successful stories in franchising—including the likes of JolliVee, Max, GoldDiscs, Bench, Pancake House, Potato Corner, and Candy Corner.

Francorp Philippines has produced to date over 180 franchises, many of which are well-respected brands that have reaped global success and momentous growth in the industry.

Marking its 10th year anniversary, Francorp Philippines staged a dinner-celebration at the Ayala Museum last Jan. 31. Held attended by the who's who in the franchise industry, the elegant evening became a very fitting tribute and thanksgiving to Francorp Philippines' clients who were recognized for their phenomenal success, nationally and globally.

Francorp International president and Francorp Master CEO Ramon Vitug flew to Manila to grace the occasion and together with Trade Secretary Peter Sevilla and Francorp Philippines chief Santos Lim (CCO) presided over the first 20 top clients the Francorp International's Award of Distinction. Recognition, passion, quality, entrepreneurism and consistency in running their franchises as well as bringing their franchises to world class performance levels earned their top companies the Hall of Fame Awards and for the top 5 vouchers to food, retail and service franchising.

Awarded were some of the best names in the country's franchising sector today such as Tony Tan Caktiong, chairman/CEO of Jollibee Foods Corp. who was named World Entrepreneur of the Year, and Hall of Famers Wan's Restaurant, Goldilocks Bakeshop, Bench, Seaside House, Potato Corner, and Candy Corner.

Francorp Philippines is the top franchise for the evening gave a very heartwarming speech on how Francorp had guided him during his early years as a fast food company, the special relations he had with Francorp USA's Ramon Vitug Jr. Dominic and how this history became part of Jollibee's success today.

Other top honorees were Shakeshoppe, Kumbana, Bayo, Islands Icecreams, Greenpa, Dunkin Donut and Royce Hazelnuts.

Skype, Google out to snatch more revenues

By Abigail L. Ho

FOOD LINE OPERATORS HAVE TO find more ways to cash in on their initiatives at Skype and Google continue to eat at their revenues with "novel" forms of communication among online communities.

According to a report by IT and media advisory firm Analysys, companies such as Skype and Google that provide non-traditional telephony services have the potential to rake away as much as $ 81.2 billion in revenue from traditional telecom operators.

This amount should be roughly equivalent to 5.6 percent of the global fixed telephony market by 2011.

Skype and Google both offer free PC-to-PC calls, a service that bypasses the public switch telephone network and leaves taking away local and international voice-call revenues from fixed line operators.

With Skype's free PC-to-PC calling service, for example, a person in the Philippines can talk to a friend one abroad without having to pay overseas call charges.

A user only needs a good enough internet connection, a headset and microphone, and the downloadable Skype program.

The software option allows people from both ends of the line to see each other while talking—something that fixed line telephony cannot offer.

"The usage associated with these services, while predominantly incremental at present, will increasingly substitute for traditional communications services," stated the Analysys report titled Next-Traditional Hyatt in Communications Markets.

Report author Stephen Ibbs said online communities and portals promoted new communication tactics, what with their being on a "middle ground" between one-to-one and one-to-many interactions.

"The success of many of these services calls into question established ideas of user behavior and suggests alternative means of addressing the communications market," he said.

Food firm makes bet on food safety

By Joel V. Nigos

IS YOUR WATER SAFE FOR drinking? Are your noodles, cupcakes, bread and milk free? Do? Are you sure of the percent, fat, salt, carbohydrate and fiber contents as indicated in the product labels? Are you getting the right nutrients from the food you buy?

These maybe are some of the questions you ask whenever you buy your water for drinking, poultry and marine products such as shrimp, pork and fish, even the noodles and other groceries from the supermarket.

Cancer survivor

Pinky Tobiano, president and CEO of QualiBet Testing Services Inc., says microorganisms are present in almost all stages of the food process—from harvesting of vegetables and handling of the products, farming of marine products, raising of pork and other poultry up to the final preparation of food in the homes.

Fish, for instance, can contain antibiotic residue, salmonella, e-coli and malachite green which is very cancerous. Chicken has the same problem. The same food may even contain harmful substances which are not good for human consumption.

That's why it's very important to test the quality and safety of these products.

QualiBet, which has the quality to better, is a food, water, pharmaceutical and veterinary testing facility it is also the newest and most modern testing facility in the Philippines managed by ISO-trained chemists, pharmacists, microbiologists and pathologists.

Cancer survivor

Tobiano is a cancer survivor who has made it her personal advocacy to ensure food safety for all and not just for a privileged few.

It was three years ago when she was diagnosed with breast cancer stage 2 (papillary carcinoma). She underwent a delicate operation that took out the cancer.

"After fighting cancer for the past three years, the best way I see to give back to society is through my gift of being a chemist. I'm neither a charismatic speaker nor an artist, so not my knowledge as a chemist is the only way I can help other people."

Tobiano is a BS Chemistry graduate of UST. She also took the "Owner President Management Course" at Harvard. She prepared her to start QualiBet which she founded eight months ago.

"It's probably one of my desire to create awareness for safe water, vegetable products, marine and poultry products, proper nutrition labelling, composition of cosmetics, components of baby food, and everything a chemist can analyze that's why I started QualiBet," she shares.

The water we use for drinking, she explains, can cause a lot of diseases. "It's not enough that our drinking water has maximum filtration. Handling is so important. We should also check regularly the containers that we use, where we store it, the hose, etc."

As for proper nutrition labeling, she says, "It's not enough to say how cholesterol, how fat or low of this or that, it should not be qualitative. It should be quantitative." Proper nutrition labeling means the product should contain what the labels say.

Government-accredited

"I believe it's the right of every Filipino consumer to know the nutritional facts of what they buy. In being a responsible manufacturer, they should provide us with the right labels."

QualiBet has been actively working with various government agencies such as the Department of Health, Trade and Industry and Agriculture in the testing of farm, marine and poultry products.

In fact, these government agencies have accredited QualiBet as a testing center. Tobiano explained that though these agencies have their own testing facilities, they are sometimes swamped with various agricultural, aquatic and animal products to be tested, thus, the need for a third party to do the testing.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, an agency of the agriculture department, for one, recently tapped the services of QualiBet to test marine products for antibiotic residues and other harmful chemicals such as chloramphenicol and nitrofurans and several other tests that include checking for e-coli and salmonella and other potentially hazardous contaminants.

She points out that this is very significant because the Philippines is an exporter of various marine products such as farm-grown bangus, tilapia and prawns and consignments from seaweed as well as various agricultural products.

"If you want to capture the export market, your products must meet all the quality tests of importing countries," Tobiano stresses. "When your products passed the tests of QualiBet, your products would surely pass the export market because our testing facilities are up to international standards."

QualiBet is a member of the American Association of Analytical Chemists and is an ISO 9000 certified.

She adds that these accreditations helped enhance QualiBet's advocacy.

Tobiano says that they are currently licensing chefs of farms and inspecting water refilling stations, fast-food chains, hotel and restaurants, hospitals, property management companies as well as cosmetic manufacturers. "Cosmetics may also contain harmful substances. That's why we're offering our services to them. An airline is also talking to us right now as the tests on the food they serve on the plane."

Focus market

She adds that though they have the most modern facilities for testing, QualiBet's charges are still 20 to 30 percent more competitive than other companies that offer the same services.

"This is no lie. Since QualiBet has not been just a business but a personal advocacy. In fact, for as low as P600, ordi-

TOBIANO, president and CEO, QualiBet Testing Inc.

nary households can have the quality of their drinking water tested."

With her own experience with cancer and the realization of how it's important to ensure food safety, Tobiano says that she wants it to be her legacy even just for her children to make sure that what they eat and the products that they use are safe.

"You know what's my vision, I look forward to the time when I go to a fast food chain and I would know how much calories I would get when I eat this burger or fries," she concludes.

BUSINESS Monday

Online stock trading firm offers starter account for students

BY A RADICAL MOVE TO ORDAIN the retail investor base in the Philippines, listed firm GlobeOnline (GOL) is now wooing students to invest in the stock market with a special package, shifting away from the traditional market of high net worth individuals, the firm has been successfully using its proprietary online trading game that emulates the stock market to interest young investors in the bourse.

Gonzalo Sison, president of GlobeOnline, relates that the encouraging results of its recent online stock trading tournaments, called the NBA Investment Challenge, among graduate business students nationwide spurred the listed firm to launch a starter account and lower the minimum investment from P20,000 to P5,000 for students with a valid student ID. GOL-PH, as the starter account is called, hopes to woo investors from among university, graduate and post-graduate students.

He relates that the 1st GlobeOnline MBA Investment Challenge launched in November 2006 and concluded mid-February 2007, attracted 200 graduate business students from 29 universities nationwide who actively traded listed stocks using a game that emulated the market.

Participants were from top schools, distributed in Metro Manila such as ASM, Ateneo, DLSU, IESE, IPE, IM-BA, PSU-SMSF and UP as well as premier schools from the provinces such as Universidad de Cagayan Valley University, Saint Louis University, and Southwestern University Cebu.

The winners were a graduate student specializing in IT from Polytechnic University of the Philippines and a graduate business student from De La Salle Professional School. Sison notes: "Our experience has shown that such survey college students have a strong potential to invest and succeed in the stock markets."

Rajeswhyr Sonald Aban, a Master of Science in Information Technology student at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), won in the early years of his graduate studies when he learned about GlobeOnline. He was able to practice his theories and strategies, culled from through GlobeOnline's Virtual Tycoon game that he subsequently shifted to the real thing. With the help of research, both in fundamentals and technical analysis provided by GlobeOnline, he was able to spot good risk-making opportunities which led him to make substantial earnings and finished 76 percent of the construction of his home in Batangas.

At the end of the tournament in mid-February this year, Aban had the highest portfolio value or contest prizes and won a P20,000 trading account from GlobeOnline.

Second placer Rodey Lazard, a Child your MBM student from De La Salle, is also a real-life stock investor. He was convinced that he was able to quickly cop, follow on investment opportunities through GlobeOnline's online tools such as the real-time ticker, the streaming market data, and quotes. He believes that he was able to achieve a net portfolio gain of 71 percent for the period by being able to quickly invest in market demand and supply because of the information provided by GlobeOnline.

Mark Bocchor and Irene Lim, both Master of Science in Management students at the University of Asia and the Pacific (UAP), placed third and fourth, respectively. Bocchor says he has long been interested in the bourse leading him to venture from a family of stock market traders. Lim credit one of his interest in technical analysis and combined this with short-term trading to emerge in the top five. Both participants were able to maximize the charts and technical information provided by GlobeOnline during the tournament.

Other participants of the MBA Investment Challenge relate that the tournament provided them a better understanding of the market. Mary Michelle Chit Ramanan of Ateneo de Cagayan notes: GlobeOnline: "I learned that investing in the stock exchange can provide better returns than investing in a bank."

According to Sison, GlobeOnline realized that many students are interested in investing in the stock market but are not able to open a regular account because of financial limitations. "We do want to open the doors of stock market investing for them," Sison says.

He even encourages parents to open for their children a GOL-PH starter account in lieu of cash as a graduation gift. Those interested in learning more about the stock market are invited to attend the "Learn to Invest Successfully in the Philippine Stock Market" seminar on March 14, Wednesday, 8:30 to 4:30 pm at the SEC Conference Center in Makati. For more information, visit 12-storeGlobe's website at www.globeonline.com or call 633-9999.

Term of corporate officers

THIS IS THE TIME OF THE YEAR WHEN most corporations hold their annual stockholders' meeting.

Like the winning midterm election, this yearly exercise gives the stockholders, regardless of the size of their holdings, the opportunity to choose the men and women who will run their company.

For stock corporations, these choices are called directors, for nonstock corporations, they're described as trustees or administrators.

Unless the articles of incorporation or by-laws provide for other requirements, all it takes to qualify for a director's position is ownership of at least one share of stock.

In the case of nonstock corporations, membership in the corporation is the minimum prerequisite for election as trustee.

The general rule is, directors and trustees shall hold office for one year and until their successors are elected and qualified.

If their term expires and no qualified replacements have been elected, the incumbent officials shall remain to office until their successors are eventually selected.

Exception

The one-year term is not, however, ordained in stone as far as nonstock corporations are concerned.

Sec. 92 of the Corporation Code gives those corporations leeway in determining the terms of office of their trustees.

It reads: "Unless otherwise provided in the articles of incorporation or by-laws, the board of trustees of nonstock corporations, which may be more than 15 in number, shall ... classify themselves into the same of office of one-third of the number shall expire every year, and subsequent elections of trustees comprising one-third of the board of trustees shall be held annually and trustees so elected shall have a term of three years."

The interpretation of this rather innocuous provision was the subject of a query to the Securities and Exchange Commission by a sports association that organized itself into a nonstock corporation.

The association asked if it can amend its by-laws in such a way that the election of the members of its board of trustees is held every four years instead of once a year, as originally agreed.

Apparently, the association believes that changing their trustees every year is disadvantageous to their efforts to develop and promote their favorite sport in the country.

The members would like their trustees to stay put for four continuous years without being distracted by a yearly election ritual.

The association also wanted to amend its by-laws in that the board of trustees meets only every four months in lieu of the original once-a-month schedule.

Corporate Securities Info

Raoul Palabrica

Choice of term

The SEC stated that the "unless otherwise provided" clause in Sec. 92 authorizes corporate organizations to circulate on the term of office of its trustees through their articles of incorporation or by-laws.

Three things though have to be taken into consideration by the association (or any nonstock corporation) for that f it is easier to amend its articles or by-laws for that purpose.

First, a lifetime or unlimited term is not allowed. Why? Because it "absolutely deprives other stockholders or members the opportunity to participate in the management of the corporation."

Second, the term should not at any one time exceed five years.

In arriving this limit, the SEC took its cue from Sec. 7 of the code which states that if the stockholder right to be waived or in the election of directors is granted in some stockholders, "it must be to a limited period not to exceed five years subject to the approval of the SEC."

The idea is, after five years, it's only fair that the other members are given a chance to run the affairs of the corporation.

Third, any amendment of the by-laws shall take effect only upon its approval by the SEC.

Meeting goes on

While the association was given the go-signal to amend its by-laws to allow a four-year term for its trustees, the SEC reminded that this should not be taken to mean that the association can skip its annual membership meeting.

That activity should go on as scheduled even if no election for trustees is held during the supposed four-year term.

With regard to the association's plan to amend its by-laws to make the board of trustees meet every four months, the SEC likewise did not interpose any objections to that move.

The right of the association to make that change is clear from Sec. 53 of the code which states that "regular meetings of the board of directors or trustees of every corporation shall be held monthly, unless the by-laws provide otherwise." (Feedback to rpalabrica@inquirer.com.ph)

BUSINESS Monday

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Business/Features Editor
Margie Quiroga Aquino

From an NGO to a bank serving the poor

Microfinance firm takes Grameen model a step further

By Nina Catherine Calleja
Inquirer Southern Luzon

SAN PABLO CITY—BACK IN THE early 1990s, people thought Dr. Jaime Ascacio Alip's proposal to establish an institution providing loans for the poorest farmers would never get off the ground.

But Alip proved them wrong.

The Center for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) Inc., a nongovernment organization (NGO) Alip founded in 1986, has gone on to mobilize the landless farmers in its area and lift them out of poverty.

CARD Inc. has since expanded, establishing other institutions such as CARD Mutually Reinforcing Institutions (MRI), the CARD Mutual Benefit Association (CARD MBA), the CARD-MRI Development Institute (CMDI) and the CARD Business Development Services (CARD-BDS).

Alip said that the five institutions, including Card Inc., reinforce one another, sustaining their efforts to assist the poorest among the poor by providing microfinance and other special development services, such as credit with education.

"Side financial support is not enough to (help) the poor," he said.

At present, CARD-MRI has 233 NGO branches, 56 office units, 22 banks and 4 head offices throughout the country.

As of December 2006, the institutions had served almost half a million clients. Alip said the rate of clients who were able to repay their loans remained high at 98.5 percent.

He also said that the clients they had served 10 years ago were no longer poor.

"Many of our microfinance borrowers have increased their business activities," he claimed. "They are now employers."

A pioneer of Grameen banking in the country, the CARD-MRI has established the groundwork for microfinance in the country.

The Grameen movement

Alip met Dr. Muhammad Yunus, founder of the Grameen movement and 2006 Nobel Peace Prize awardee, during the latter's tour of several rural development projects in the Philippines in 1983.

"We had the opportunity to discuss (Yunus') projects," Alip said. "Back, he told me he was giving loans to the poorest among the poor in Bangladesh."

MORE STORIES B2-3

THE HEAD QUARTERS of CARD in San Pablo City

DR. JAIME Ascacio Alip

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INFOTECH

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Samsung unveils industry-first IT products

SAMSUNG'S latest offerings, the 460PXn 46-inch LCD monitor (left) and the 226BW 22-inch

Text and photos by Charles E. Buhon

SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS last week unveiled a number of industry-first products in the printer, LCD monitor, and personal computer enhancement categories.

Announcing these premium IT products was the Samsung CLP-300, considered the world's smallest and lightest color laser printer.

The introduction of this compact laser printer marks another milestone for Samsung as it further revolutionizes the color laser printer by making it more affordable and an ideal desktop companion for individual use," said Hong Wan Kim, Samsung Electronics Philippines vice president for IT.

Sporting a conventional cubical design, the CLP-300 weighs just 15.6 kg and offers a footprint of a fifty opened magazine, thus helping save valuable desk space and making this printer easier to move around.

THE CLP-300 is quite portable and a space saver thanks to its 15.6-kg weight and compact dimension

Innovative design

The rest of CLP-300's innovative design are not readily seen. Pull down its front cover and one will discover that instead of having a large and unwieldy cartridge (that most laser printers use today), it uses four cylindrical toner containers...each about the size of a sardines can—that fit neatly into the machine.

Just like what is now found in most inkjet printers, the CLP-300's four color sealed containers can be replaced individually, resulting in greater cost savings.

But while Samsung would love to boast about its fast printing speed (up to four pages a minute for color and 16 pages a minute for black and white printing) and quiet operation (less than 49 decibels while printing, which is more like being inside a library), its P16,500 price tag would be more than enough reason not to market it.

Poised to challenge the home and small office market's color inkjet monopoly, the Samsung CLP-300 series provides an affordable alternative to monochrome laser printers and color inkjets.

External drive

Another Samsung product that should catch market attention is its latest slot-in slim external DVD drive.

The SE-T084B, is the world's first external drive that would write as well as read while working in power from its high-speed USB port (it also has an AC adapter).

Apart from accepting the usual 12-cm disc, it would also accept the 8-cm format—another industry-first—which makes this drive compatible with disc camcorders that use this particular media.

Samsung also said that the P7,300 external drive supports LightScribe technology that enables its user to engrave personalized label on the surface of the disc.

Strong and consistent player

Being a strong player in the LCD market, Samsung also unveiled its two latest LCD monitor models.

Samsung's SyncMaster 226BW (priced P26,000) features a 22-inch widescreen display that allows its user to multitask—open several applications and display them at the same time.

It features a lightning-fast response time that will make it particularly attractive to gamers who seek large, crisp-to-life images and vivid gaming experience.

Samsung also added that the 226BW (as well as its other 19-, 20- and 22-inch monitor) it has recently been awarded the Windows Vista Premium certification that would allow these display products to accommodate Windows Vista user interface.

The 46-inch 460PXn LCD monitor, on the other hand, is designed for use in corporate and commercial digital signage applications (such as those found in airports, malls, restaurants and commercial buildings).

This P158,000 monitor features 800:1 contrast ratio, 1,366 x 768 resolution, and 500 cd/m2 brightness, making this particular display model among the brightest and sharpest in the market today.

Apart from having an S-video, Picture-in-Picture and Picture-by-Picture capability, RS232C (a standard serial interfacing for PCs), NTSC/PAL/Secam format support, the 460PXn is equipped with Samsung's MagicNet software.

This technology allows businesses all the benefits of digital signage without the need for a dedicated PC for each display (an example would be a retail store that showcases its latest apparel on one set of 460PXn displays while items that are on sale on another and a store directory on yet another set of displays).

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3LCD

Building schoolhouses nationwide

SM PRIME HOLDINGS INC. through the SM Foundation Inc. turned over to the Department of Education 11 school buildings and a convenient drive-thru classroom at school building inside the Depot's Adopt-a-School Program.

The elementary school buildings are in Kiunos, Iligan, Sultanazan, Tiwal and Dimco in Buhi; Bagong Bayan and Bulgarayan in Naga; Cavite; Jesefa Garcia in Bogtio City; Matabanya and Cumbalanza in Cagayan de Oro City; San Vicente in Puerto Princesa City; Pampanga; Pedro Bargas in Quezon; and Dalahican and Kanaluran in Lucena City.

The renovated three classroom high school building is located in Dalahican Elementary School.

Each two-classroom schoolhouse is provided with one toilet with running water, 100 schoolchairs, blackboards, teacher's table and chair.

SM Foundation undertakes a yearly maintenance of these schoolhouses. The total cost of these classrooms is estimated at P5.25 million.

In a statement, Department of Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said, "Providing adequate school buildings for the growing student population is a challenge that Depdd cannot have alone with its limited resources. We are grateful for SM Prime Holding's contribution of these classrooms for our students."

SM Foundation executive director Debbie Ty assured the Depdd that more activities would be forthcoming. SM will continue to support the Adopt-a-School Program that will see that each of the Foundation's are currently assessing new locations for classrooms based on the recommendations of the Depdd taking note of the ratio of classrooms to student: 55-60 students only.

SM Foundation has four areas of advocacy: education through college scholarships and the construction of SM schoolhouses in various sites; the commemoration of the Department of Education; health programs through medical missions, mobile clinics and hospital service centers; mall based outreach program and other grass-roots community programs.

The foundation has recently partnered with the Gawad Kalinga project of the Couples for Christ in putting up 87 houses for the poor in Mandaluyong City.

In partnership with ABS-CBN e-Media, the foundation in 2005-2006 donated educational TV (all-active learning system) of TV sets, video, CD/DVD players and educational materials to 60 public elementary schools in Cavite, Batangas and Manila.

The foundation has likewise donated entire tanks to the Juan Sumilang Elementary School and Cecilio Apostol Elementary School in Manila; repaired and refurbished the Rizal Memorial Swimming Pool; and donated computers, furniture in Ma-a High School in Davao and the wrestling high school in Manila.

A library in Nueva Ecija's Muñoz Municipal High School in Bifian, Laguna was put up through a donation from the foundation. In 2006, 121,000 books were distributed to 1,400 public schools, barangays and day care centers.

Pelindal Ty, sentinels of the SY family and Debbie Ty, executive director of the SM Foundation Inc. formally signed the turnover documents to Undersecretary Teodoro Kangil. Witnessing the turnover were officials of the Department of Education led by Undersecretary for Administration Jesus Jara and Franklin Bautista and SM Foundation Director Carmen Linda Maydo.

Pinoy engineer builds railways to the world

By Gino Dariolmolo

JOSEPH Allan Dilay

A CIVIL ENGINEERING GRADUATE, THE young Joseph Allan Dilay had set his sights on getting a job in construction projects overseas.

This was sometime in 1978, a year after he obtained his diploma from the Batangas State University's (BatStateU) then Batangas College of Technology, when he found himself avoiding an project engineer of a public works department in Bahrain.

His first Middle East job would be followed by luck off a successful career in railway and mass transit, with a string of projects costing in various parts of the world.

Today, Dilay, 50, sits as chair of the group of companies that he put up and proudly bears his initials: JAD Group of Companies. Being involved in various mass railway and civil engineering projects here and abroad, he divides his time in various sites, making sure that every project gets his full attention. His consulting firm, JAD and Associates, boasts a highly qualified team of engineering professionals backed up by an experienced support staff involved in the design, construction and maintenance of rail transport systems.

A few years ago, Dilay took one of the biggest challenges of his career as the track work engineer and consultant for the two lines of the Metro Manila Light Rail Transit. Line 1 involved a 15.4-km elevated line with 18 stations running north-south of Metro Manila while Line 2 is a 13.8-km almost totally elevated system running eastwest through Rizal-Manila-Marikina-Antipolo. Dilay served as multi-consultant to "Sacyr-Ital Aspaul for Line 1 and design consultant for Line 2, involving the modern segmental viaduct system, the first of its kind in the country. The jobs completed satisfactorily, he amply proved himself by having fully met the challenges.

"The Filipino's skill, talent and expertise are definitely at par with the best of the world," says Dilay, a registered professional engineer in the United States and Canada, and an affiliate member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Association of Professional Engineers in British Columbia, Canada.

Among the rail projects he was actively involved in, in the United States, were the Light Rail Transit Systems in Denver, Colorado, the Las Vegas People Mover, Long Beach Transit, Los Angeles Light Rail Transit and Metro Rail Lines.

In Taiwan, Dilay was involved in tunnel construction for Chungho Line and underground stations for Hsinchu Line in the northern Taipei. Besides projects in Taipei, he worked the design of a 12-km track heavy rail system.

Dilay's Genlalo Trading and Contracting Company is the backbreaker of joint ventures which signed a system maintenance contract for the Manila LRT 1 system with the Light Rail Transit Authority on May 24, 2004 until Sept. 30, 2008, which includes 64 Bridges and 18 Korean-made vehicles as well as receiving track, power supply and other rail-related systems. The contract, however, had expired and the JAD Group is very eager to participate once more in the forthcoming bidding of the maintenance contract.

Genlalo Trading is more than qualified to do the job. It is the recipient, in 2005, of the "Most Outstanding Rail Transit Employer," award jointly conferred by the Japan Institute, The Philippine Marketing Practitioners Association, the Asia Pacific Global Awards and Business Asia Magazine. The award is testament to the Company's superior value of offering, product quality and strong customer orientation.

With 28 years of railway experience behind him, Dilay has realized he needed to grow professionally. He needed to enroll in review courses in civil engineering at California State University in Los Angeles, and graduate school in Canada. He took and, recently, he is a licensed civil and trackwork engineer both in the US and Canada. He was also given a civil engineering license in Canada after passing the qualifying examinations.

This year, Dilay has embarked on supplying skilled manpower and management to Qatar, via the Indian firm-on-the board in Bureau, Canada.

His company is also involved in sub-contracting services in the field of Civil Engineering and Construction.

His sights are now set to contribute his talent in railway system in Vancouver, with the help of dedicated, experienced and globally competent engineering and construction professionals. His goal is to always thrive on excellence in finally becoming world-class professionals.

The Great Pinoy Dream, as prospects augur positive the engineer who dreamed of the world, is well on its way to becoming a reality.

Ling Nam opens first franchise store

LING NAM, THE CHINESE SOUP dumpling that started in 1956, recently inaugurated its first franchise store located along Bonifacio, Quezon City.

Mr. Mark Poon Inc., master franchisee of Ling Nam, awarded the franchise business to the 37 Noodle Shop Inc. composed of Raymund Co, Peleon Sia, Willie Co, Nicholas Co and Claudio Chua.

"The company was established primarily for the Ling Nam franchise business. We've been friends for a long time but this is the first time that we ventured in to a business together. And Ling Nam is our only choice.

Aside from the additional savings, we opened the store for environmental reasons," Co, co-owner of the 37 Noodle Shop Inc. said.

"Ling Nam is part of our childhood. The brand is close to our hearts. I think it's just the right time that we pass the tradition to our children. We want them to grow up appreciating our Chinese culture," Co added.

Mr. Mark Poon Inc. president Jessy Tung shares that the opening of the Banawe store is part of the company's aggressive efforts of getting back into market.

"It's about time that our owners waited long enough and now, the company is experiencing an existing growth. After the Banawe store, we are soon anticipating two new branches into the Ling Nam family. There are Ling Nam Library Center and Ling Nam Convertible," he adds.

Ling Nam's opening of its Banawe store makes the restaurant's 50-year-old tradition of serving authentic Chinese dishes more accessible to consumers.

From an NGO...

From page B1-1

"I actually laughed at his idea at that time," he added. "I told myself, this man was looking out because Bangladesh is the poorest country in the world. So how can the poorest among the poor pay the loans?"

He said that in 1988, he went to Bangladesh to see for himself what Yunus' treatment movement was all about.

"I was surprised to see that it was really happening in Bangladesh," Alip said. "The poor in that country could really repay their loans because of their discipline and creativity."

When Alip came back to the Philippines, he was eager to start working with his staff at CARD Inc.

In no time, Alip and his staff achieved a measure of success in helping the poor through the opportunities they helped create.

Difficult days

It was in 1998 when Alip was first exposed to countryside development when he joined the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), then the largest grant-making NGO in the country.

"I had seen the need to penetrate the landless rural members who did not have any assets and were paid by their hourly labor," he said. "I had felt that this sector was so marginalized."

He said the poor farmers should be given credit and the opportunity to productively work and earn as most of them have the skills and experience.

Alip, with other social development practitioners, banned the backbone of the organization in 1986, with only P20 as initial fund and an old typewriter to get things moving. The group held office in a small space beside the public market in the city.

Realizing the need for financial support, Alip submitted proposals to funding agencies.

In 1988, two Japanese agencies accepted his proposal and funded the initial operation of the NGO.

Alip recounted the days he spent in Japan to speak in the heads of the agencies.

"I had no money to stay in a hotel," he recalled. "Some of my friends financed my phone ticket and allowance. So I slept at the airport for three days."

His Japanese friend later found out what he had been through.

"Perhaps because of pity, his company acquired my proposal and provided $20,000," he said.

The CARD team immediately started the livelihood assistance program for landless rural women in their city.

CARD Bank

In December 1990, the board of directors of CARD Inc. began the transformation of the NGO into a bank to tap the commercial loan market.

CARD Inc. obtained from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas the license to operate as a rural bank in San Pablo City with an initial paid-up capital of P5 million ($167,000) in August 1997. Four of the 15 CARD NGO branches were then converted into CARD banks.

CARD Inc. became the first non-thrusts NGO that was transformed into a formal financial intermediary.

Alip said they continued to challenge traditional banking, thrusts of the bank and the clients share the dividends of the profit. The banks are not based on any collateral or liquidity enforceable contracts.

According to licensees banking, loans are based on "trust," not on legal procedures and system. Also, a client may be a shareholder who has a chance to be a representative in the board.

Other institutions

Aside from the NGO and the bank, other institutions were also established to help clients and members.

The CARD Mutual Benefit Association, an insurance institution, was founded in April 1994 to extend financial assistance to its members through death benefits, medical subsidy, pension and other loan redemption packages.

Alip said the CARD MBA will eventually be registered as a full-blown insurance company as soon as capitalization requirements are met.

As most of its clients need confidential services to establish and expand their businesses, the CARD SME Center was also established.

Alip said the center assists clients in providing business technology and product development as well as links to suppliers.

The center also provides training, technical assistance and consultancy on market access and alternative financing mechanisms.

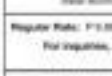
On the other hand, the CARD was instrumental in provide paralegal and degree courses to managers, staff and members specializing on microfinance.

"These institutions are interdependent, with one common goal," Alip said.

Session 1: How To Use Blue Ocean Strategy To Develop and Launch New Products That Will Make Competitors Play Catch Up
Isidro Lo, Chairman, Mandarin and Fielders, Inc.

Session 2: How To Strategize Thru A Brand Portfolio of Products
Dinah Gomez, Category Director for Skin and Deodorants and Head of Marketing Training, Unilever Philippines

Session 3: How To Formulate Your Brand DNA for Success
Mona Pineda, VP-Corporate Marketing, Splash Holdings
Session 4: How To Benefit From In-Store Consumer Behavior Research
Ronnel Co-Ed, Managing Director, AC Nielsen Philippines



Session 5: How Suppliers Can Maximize Retail Investment
Wilson Lim, President, Alaminos, Hallerstorf & Rivera Retail Group and Ivonne Lim, Managing Director, Hallerstorf Supermarket

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BUSINESS Monday

Shift in market to hit cell phone chips makers

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CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA – Cell phones are increasingly with a single chip to handle all their myriad workings, which may spell trouble for the companies supplying more specialized chips.

Three makers include RF Micro Devices Inc., STMicroelectronics NV and Skyworks Solutions Inc. However, the news is good for Texas Instruments Inc., a holdout in the single-chip movement.

Single-chip phones offer fewer features but have room to grow hotly, especially in developing countries, where prices matter most and sales are brisk. Projections suggest that such phones could represent 10 percent of the total handset shipments by the end of 2008.

"It's where the industry is moving as a noticeable part," said Cody Acree, a semiconductor analyst at Stifel Nicolaus. "It's not something that's off in the future."

The move to a single-chip architecture is a natural progression for the semiconductor market and follows a similar track as the personal-computer industry, where companies like Intel Corp. are developing chips with built-in graphics capabilities.

"Certainly people want fancy phones, but the bread and butter is at the low end," said Roger Kay, president and founder of market research firm Endpoint Technologies Associates. "Integration is always a threat to those that make discrete parts."

Thinkequity Partners analyst Michael Burton said that he expects 20 percent of new cell phones to contain a single chip by the end of 2008, and the gains won't be confined to low-end phones.

Burton said Texas Instruments' solution has gained meaningful traction among the top cell phone makers.

Dallas-based Texas Instruments agrees a single-chip architecture won't only be for cheap handsets. Mario Manning, vice president and general manager of Cellular Systems at Texas Instruments, said it also will find its way into midrange cell phones, largely in emerging markets.

Today there are 2.8 billion cell phone subscribers, with that number expected to reach 4 billion in 2010, noted Manning.

Michael Markowitz, a spokesperson at STMicroelectronics, maker of discrete components for cell phones, said that, by the time mid-range cell phones start incorporating single-chip architecture, the company should have a product available.

The STMicroelectronics spokesperson said the trend toward a single chip has a "minimal impact" since most of the phones using the single chip are in areas of the market his company doesn't go after.

Susan Daly, vice president of marketing at Skyworks, said in an e-mail statement that for the "foreseeable future" a single-chip architecture will only be needed in the low-end "voice-centric" cell phone market.

"As cell consumers' appetite for phones that include things like digital music players, camcorders and video recording will drive the need for specialized chips.

"In the meantime, there's a single-chip architecture. Here we weighted our linearly on the shares of chip makers providing components to cell phone makers.

AP

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The four-hour lecture includes how to solve the owner's problem; the overall strategies; keys to success; how to find distressed properties/sellers; how to make 'your offer' important provisions for your protection; negotiating strategies with owner and lender; common mistakes that should be avoided; valuing properties by real appraisal; many tips on inspecting properties, financing, rehabilitating the property, selling the property, documentation and registration, taxation; and other important matters.

For inquiries, call 661-8910, 0916-420-9574 or 0921-883-9431 or by email at urbanrealty@dlc.net.ph.

Other seminars by the Urban Institute are: March 22—How to Start and Manage a Successful Real Estate Brokerage Company; March 16—Legal Aspect of Sale, Mortgage and Loans with Correct Documentation and Negotiation; March 16—Property Investment Principles and Update on HLURB Rules.

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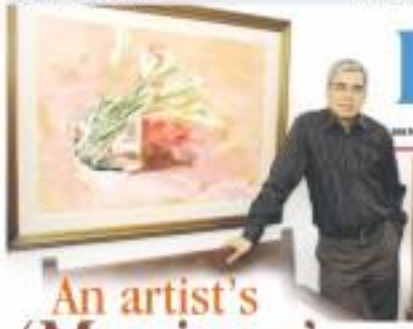

An artist's 'Musings'

By James P. Ong
Contributor

SOME PAINTINGS ARE made to stop you dead on your tracks. The works of R. Ocampo Cruz don't have this appeal. You walk by and see them in your peripheral vision—and then take a step back and realize that it's something you'd want to take your time looking at. They represent the classic meaning of art: captured beauty.

"I have no pretensions as a painter," says Cruz, who opens his third solo exhibit, "Musings," this week. "What you see is what you get. I paint with a passion and you can see it in my strokes."

If there's anyone who knows about passion, it's Cruz.

Cruz majored in painting at the College of Architecture and Fine Arts of University of Santo Tomas, where he studied under the likes of Botticelle Concibol, Wenceslao Garcia, Angelito Antonio, Mario Parial and Leonardo Hidalgo.

At UST he was painting videos of Vhiton, the student organ of his college. But he never went full-time as an artist. Instead, he ventured into sales and marketing communications.

Today, he runs a marketing and public relations firm that also serves as publisher of Muse, a quarterly art magazine funded by top companies who are big into social corporate responsibility.

Cruz likes to boast that he is one of those rare businessmen who are also artists.

But he never abandoned art. "I try to paint when I have the time. When the conditions are conducive. Meetings are usually the best time," he muses.

In "Musings," he finally fulfills his dream of showing his nude charcoal drawings with his acrylic paintings. There are also works in watercolor and ink.

The collection was done in a span of 10 years in different places done at a leisurely pace.

"While on a beach in Malibu, California, and Puerto Galera in Mindoro. The nudes were done in the UST College of Fine Arts studio and a Legazpi Village studio. The acrylic on canvas paintings were done in my earliest," he says.

"Musings" was organized while Cruz was in the thick of producing the second issue of Muse magazine; which he says will always be done to his heart.

"My visions is to reach every Filipino wherever they are in all parts of the world," he says. "For a start the National Commission for Culture and the arts buys copies for distribution to consular offices abroad). Several real-estate companies have also pledged advertising support and distribute the Muse to all their triad clients abroad," he says.

"Musings," on exhibit by Ramon-dela Ocampo Cruz, opens on March 16 at 1-of Gallery, 2/F, Avenida-e Plaza, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig. Call 908 3332.

ARTIST R. Ocampo Cruz

"AT LAST"

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"MY DILEMMA"

Philippine Embassy in Seoul hosts Moscoso exhibit

PAINTER Edsel Moscoso shows off her work to guests.

MOSCOSO, Philippine ambassador to South Korea Susan G. Castroence; Kwon-Jin Yoon, director of the Korea Foundation Cultural Center; and artist Edsel Gregg Angeles

IN CELEBRATION OF THE NATIONAL ARTS Month last February, Philippine Ambassador Susan G. Castroence led the opening of the painting exhibition "Latin Ethnicity" showcasing artworks by acclaimed Filipino artist Edsel Moscoso.

The opening was followed by a reception hosted by the embassy at the Korea Foundation Cultural Center on Feb. 15. It was attended by members of the diplomatic corps, Filipino community and Koreans art enthusiasts.

The exhibition, hosted by the embassy with the support of Korea Foundation, brings to Seoul 16 works by Moscoso portraying rural life in his home province of Antique inspired by his lifetime of watching rural folks including farmers, fisherfolk, market vendors and children.

In her remarks during the opening ceremony, Ambassador Castroence expressed her hope that the Korean public and the diplomatic community would appreciate the genius that Moscoso has in him which is dedicated to the rural folks under the scenic arbors he grew up.

"Moscoso is one of the most notable contemporary artists in the Philippines and we want him to be known to Korea and the rest of Asia," Castroence said.

An art reviewer in the English daily Korea Herald, described Moscoso's paintings as "simple in its complexity—having no futuristic transformations occurring, no epiphanies or mental messages. Instead 'there's the work of an artist experimenting with core positions, juxtaposing figures with everyday rural life. However, will be confronted with questions about the finer details of life and be pushed toward its more vacillating between the Christ-like and."

According to Yoon Kwan Jin, director of the Korea Foundation Cultural Center: "The Philippines is very well known to Koreans given the related people to people exchanges but Koreans have not yet been exposed to Filipino contemporary art." By bringing Moscoso's works to Seoul, ambassador Castroence hopes that Koreans will find an appreciation for the artistic side of Filipinos.

The exhibition will run until March 16 at the Gallery Hyo of the Korea Foundation Center in Seoul.

THE ARTIST

ARGENTINE Ambassador Alfredo A. Rizzi Jr., Ambassador Castroence, Sub-Lieutenant Ambassador J. Bubba I. Ferrera, Singaporean Ambassador Chan Thai Kong and other guests with the artist.

Rocking the landscape

By Gina Dumlao
Contributor

A TWO-LOCKED COLLECTION OF 30 OF paintings from Raul Isidro brings its album of shocks and surprises.

Regarded as one of the stalwarts of abstract expressionism of the late '60s, Isidro has persistently taken long intervals of rest and retiring his painting chores constantly subjected to frustrations of time and space, not to mention the problem of survival. Spaced out to show an aspect of his artistic evolution, his exhibits become a venue for the artist to reflect on the vital issues affecting humanity, from the endangered climate to terrorism.

The artist, after all, has been through countless evolutions, even in the abstract genre to which he has remained devoted. Moreover, he just concluded leadership of the Philippine Association of the Philippines (PAP) has been instrumental in pushing the group to reassert itself, promoting the members and finally regaining its position in the art world. It was, of course, a matter of time before the artist could come up with a suite of abstracted memories, of specific sites he has visited and those that exist in the realm of the imagination.

Simply titled "Landscapes," Blanc Linart, Dewey Place Mall, Bacheldi, until March 14), the exhibit is a visual pilgrimage that takes the viewer back in time, more than a decade past, and through space, with all the essential qualities conjured by specific places around the globe.

Having lived for 10 years in the United States, basking in glorious California weather, Isidro has a suite of memories from the land. mapas Boston) edited to his memory the changing hues and the sweet of winters, the concomitant emotional states they evoke, the corresponding mood conjured by his trademark brushstrokes, as though personally charged with dramatic contrasts.

Calligraphy

The so-called suite of "rock" paintings is actually inspired by those periods spent by the lot taken across the country visiting cultural sites and conducting print workshops. Their shapes and colors individually resemble those of rocks—sharp-edged, richly textured, both cerebral and emotional—but the viewers has a far greater variety than what the eye can see.

With his penchant for calligraphy Isidro is a master in the art of creating texture, which he does with a gentle brutal mastery of the hands, the meaning of basic life, at the end, the image reduces a core delicacy of feeling unmistakably Isidro's.

A number of the paintings go further in this, to the artist's birthplace of Calbayog City, which he periodically revisits through his canvases.

Raul Isidro's strokes and colors conjure emotions and memories

Though remote in location, the once sleepy town, the burgeoning capital of Western Samar, Calbayog is blessed with various's own land, water, its carnivorous environment underlying story with a subconscious beauty. Making is easy each site, in idyllic and unchanged state with the sound of global seeming, as the artist remembers.

There are more landscapes to behold in this magisterial show of colors, hues, textures... and moods. The best way for the viewer to consume the artist's panoply of landscapes is to take on the 30 paintings one a time—and there will, for today, at the end.

But the viewer is well-admonished to spend some time just relishing the dyes of colors in those lovely canvases. They look as though they might handedly can rock the earth and, send less to say one's old-fashioned view of what constitutes landscapes.

E-mail the author at gdumlao@yahoo.com

VISUAL ARTS

Obsessia at West Gallery

West Gallery (#1, 104 Maginhawa), presents "Obsessia," an exhibition by Rizal Obsesia, March 15-31. She tries to exhibit sculptural canvas from Mindoro and now three have emerged over the years. Also in his canvas series, Obsessia uses textiles instead of canvas. Call 924-1384.

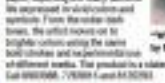
Galura at Nine

"Gino Galura," an exhibit of recent works by award-winning artist Galura, is on view at Gallery Nine in Magsaysay and Makati's Gallery in the SM Mall of Asia. Ends night is on March 14. 6:30 p.m. at Gallery Nine. The collection includes landscapes and floral flowers titled Avant-Garde and guests of honor. Call 661-1382.

Manansala at Galerie Asira

Galerie Asira (#10 El Filibusterismo Place, SP Pagasa St., Makati) presents Vicente Manansala's "Walks of Change" until March 22. Manansala's art includes different works on his chosen and humanistic on paper, depicting the many facets of life expressed in vivid colors and symbols. From the color-rich Mexican, the artist moves on to brighter colors using the same bold strokes and he performed his self-titled works. The product is a statement of his social commitment.

"Walks of Change," by Rod Manansala



"RAPUNZEL 2007," by Ernel Mirasol

Mirasol at Crucible

Ernel Mirasol currently has one collection of long-lute illustrations and paintings in his second solo exhibit at the Crucible Gallery (#9 3rd Magsaysay). Mandaluyong, exhibit opens March 13 at 6 p.m. The exhibit features paintings depicting Philippine scenes drawn in his trademark sharp brush-realist style. The show will run until March 24. Call 532-0001.

FBL photo exhibit

The Corporate Communications Department of Philippine Airlines presents "FBL at 60," the opening of the First Philippine Airlines Photo Exhibit on March 13, at 4:30 p.m. at Bulwagang Gat Andres Bonifacio, Manila. The exhibit will present March 13.

Art exhibit for a cause

Eva Pacific Manila's Pacific Lounge is the venue of "The Hands That Feed: Art Exhibit for a Cause," March 13-14. The exhibit is organized by Filipino Art and Design Collective, a multidisciplinary graphic design collective, and is open to the public from 9:30 a.m. Call 5885558.

Barja, Morada and Gonotiva at Nimonch

Nimonch Artspace in Pasig (#1 Jade Dr., Ortigas Center) presents Barja's exhibit "Diamonds" by Jerry Morada, and "Rabbit" by Jason Gonotiva. Call 6490, 6090 or 0915-7135888.

"UNTITLED," by Ronnie Barja

"BUDDHA," by Jason Gonotiva

Lecture by Ambeth Ocampo

Ayala Museum presents a talk on "Heavy Metals Artistic Industrial Terms" by Ambeth Ocampo on March 17, 2 p.m. The discussion is in line with the museum's ongoing exhibit which offers an insight into the works of 19th century Filipino artisans. It runs until May 27. Call 757-1111 to 21 local 14. Visit www.ayalamuseum.com.

Sansa in 'Zero-in'

Zero-in, the second book of the country's premier private museums, celebrates its fifth year with "Zero-in in Camera-genius." The event launches a series of exhibits at the Ateneo Art Gallery, Ayala Museum, Lopez Memorial Museum, Museo Pambata and Rufino Tolong. The Ayala Museum presents "Black Bouquet: Jeremiah Palmos," which focuses on his formerly creative period in the early years of Palmos's artistic career from 1956-1960 when the Paris-based artist produced an abundance of drawings and lithographs. Gathered together were 83 pieces from the collection of the artist, friends, and public. The works showcase Sansa's free flowing lines and his amazing grasp of texture, both vegetation and urban landscapes—many from his numerous museum printmaking. The exhibit runs until March 31. Call 757-1111 to 21.

'Nudes' by Arte Pintura

THE ARTE PINTURA, FEATURED by Adelle Reyes Calimquim, presents "Nudes," March 17, 6 p.m., at the new Pintura Gallery at 2/F Rizal Bldg., Shaw Blvd. and Nick Pinto Rd.

"Nudes" is a compilation of works produced by members Bey Adriano, Ray Acevedo, Flor Bartolli, Nona Bonifacio, Annie Marcia, Alfredo Reigadio, Aser Sarmiento, Orbit Art Tan, Rodney Tan, Toni Yuvi, together with their mentors and friends, including respected artist Edgar Doctor in a series of painting sessions with male models at their favorite painting workshop.

There is then one distinct strike, the exhibit showcases nudes in oil, watercolor, pastel and charcoal.

The Arte Pintura Painting Workshop is held every Saturday and it open to new and seasoned students interested in learning how to paint using oil as medium. Call 7286542.

NUDE painting in oil, by Tony Yuvi

CAINGAT (second from left) with art collector Manuel Dalisdis, National Press Club director Jerry Yap, art dealer Manny Reynado and Albert Alcantara of Heritage Art Center (at the back).

Caingat works at Heritage

ART INSTRUMENTS LED OF THE artist himself, Fil-Asian Jon Caingat, on the ribbon for his one-man show of his latest works at Philippine Bureau brought in from Indonesia.

The opening of "Kabuhos Colors from Down Under," was recently held at the Heritage Art Dining, 4/L, Bldg. 8, SM Megamall.

The twelve figures Caingat now style of brighter, vibrant colors. Caingat paints in a pointillist manner, building up overlaying layers that allow portions of the under painting to show through. He took art lessons from Paul de Pryer at the Julian Aderon School of Arts in Sydney, and in the 1993 and 1999 Dec. price winner of the prestigious Panbers Around show, exhibit they Art Competition.

WORKS by Jon Caingat

"BARL-BARLAN," by Jayson Samson

"FILLING the Void," by RJ Calungcan

Artists portray touch . . .

Pantagraph C4

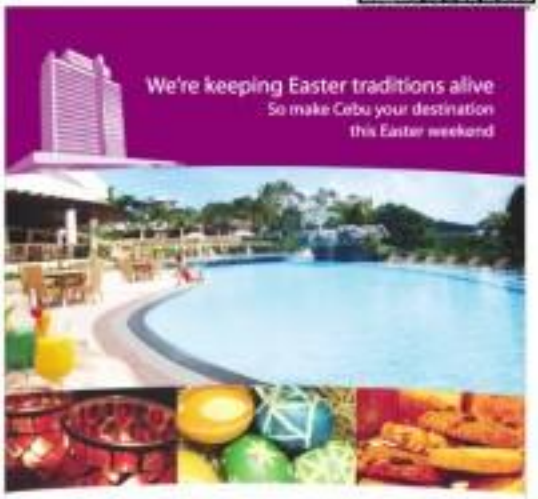
and the existence of the image cannot bridge the few inches of distance between the twain.

There are, of course, a lot of artworks here that notably realize the theme.

In Carlos Francisco II's "The Wedding," the artist has successfully created a multi-layered image of union by wedding two techniques. How he portrays an abstracted yet recognizable representational composition of a man and a woman in a half-locked embrace, and when you look closer you get the bonus of seeing the bodies melting into profiles of faces kissing.

In Merry Dudley's "Textile . . . Bowling Ground" No. 1, the artist has created a soft sculpture that fully fulfills the theme than is literally and figuratively. It is constructed fabric and metal, the furry cloth of light brown voluptuously located on stainless steel supporting hemispheric scrubbing.

Now, here is something you can touch, feel the texture, relish the softness—maybe not human but very snuggly and warm.



"THE WEDDING," by Carlos Francisco II

Artists portray touch and separation, hostility and embrace

By Constantino C. Bjarkman

AMEN ART'S VENUE HAS OPENED IN another unlikely location in the metropolis. Surprising for its relative newness, it is showing a group exhibit of powerful new names, and in large number.

In fact, some 50 noted and upcoming artists are exhibiting there weeks, ranging from painting to sculpture to print to new media. In the show "Tahap," until March 24 in Kevin Art Gallery, A/E GF0 Bldg., 110 Scout-ing Road, Quezon City.

Here are familiar names such as Jo-Jo Atienza, Red Cami, Boljie Cabanero, EJ Cabrejos, Bergie Tomada-Cabrera, Michael Casino, Daniel Coquilla, Chie Cruz, Melvin Culaba, Dee Dalmacio, Ferdinand Doctolero, Lizzido Gidoman, Surd 10 Raval, Karen Flores, Cristeta Gabotia, Winner Antolon, Erwin Lualo, Nodie Maldian, Pedro Montemayor, Jim Fevarin, Anthony Palomo, Mario Parial, Mikel Pastal, Elmer Rodin, Arnon Samson, Chie Guevara.

The exhibition's core explores the show as "works that deal with the delicacy of touch and energy, the pleasurable reverberations of various continuous and expressions of affection or endearment."

What the note fails to delineate are the nuances of this theme. Because there are some artworks here that don't typically touch on the theme of touch, or embrace, as subject is supposed to mean—but, in fact, suggest its opposite.

Take Bonito Ong's "Dreamland," a recent sculptural relief rendered in copper on fiberglass. This piece is extremely sterile, socially the theme of touch, but the piece is historical and mounted on the wall not as two parts of a diptych but as companion pieces fixed several inches away from each other. The whole does looks like a piece rendered super.

"DREAMLAND," by Bonito Ong

"TEXTILE Breeding Ground" No. 1, by Marvy Pastor

"Hard Battles," Jaypee Samson's realist rendition of two children playing toy guns, is another case. With the boy and the girl standing slightly apart with backs turned to each other while aiming their guns in opposite directions, they are either facing common enemies surrounding them and thus preventing each other, or taking the initial steps to a duel.

What we feel here is not the collective joy of communal play but the tension of containing violence and the hostility inherent in gender politics and role playing.

In Calungsod's "Filling the Void," there is spatial as well as emotional distance even in claustrophobia. In this depiction of "two dolls" faces as if about to kiss, the coldness of the impersonality betokens inherent what nonetheless bears a human mark. From the three cropping

ARTISTS (C)

LIFESTYLE

DIVIVO Licad Mercado

CIRCLE Licad

Licad teams up with son in PPO concert

By Pablo A. Tariman
Contributor

A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra music director Eugene Castillo took up with me the possibility of Cecile Licad doing Poulenc's Concerto for Two Pianos with a young artist.

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Inspired reinventions

Five plays show how thoughtful tweaking can reinvigorate stale works and art forms

By Gilda Cadiz

THE DIDELIA, THE CO-medie, the stage includes—or, for that matter, Will-ide Ms. Gonzales and the theater he represented—they're relished, mess, this, right?

Proving frontier century of the kind that could preserve dead plays and identify numbered antiques was on display in Manila's stages in the last few weeks, offering a burst of exciting theatrical fireworks before the lull of the summer months.

Meiner's Lindbads reworked the comedia in "Sandaang Pamaypay," the University of the Philippines Playwrights Theater's "Bandila ng Kalibdan" reinvented the musicals, and directors's works restored reconfiguration both sensitive—Gantimpala Theater's "Sarsuwelang Me Hary"—and cunningly radical—Rula's "Bulong Pari."

Directors has been dead for 12 years, but he has never seen work quite at the Pen Pinoma Theater, he was a palpable presence—a tangle his lover evoked in both sensitive and cunningly radical ways. Buddies left on the life and art of the late theatrical hero for Theater.

"Bulong Pari" itself would hardly be recognizable to Gary-Ma. Rhella Isidi (the director's) last play, "The Woman with a White Veil," weaves it, tucked on an unexpected version of the playwright's five one-act play, "Half an Hour to a Carnival" (it's how Spanish audiences used to kill time) now through them all his own self-reflective, metaphoric interventions or identity, illusion, death and desire—the self-interjection that artists must endure to give life to their art.

Such high-minded terms do a poor job of capturing the messy, sprawling, but also visceral and thrillingly ambitious experience that "Bulong Pari" provides for its audiences. Isidi's work would have cackled appreciatively at how he was portrayed in this play: perplexed, engaged, luminously alive—frustrated by his life's work, yet also almost in A. Isidi of the intelligence, surrounded not by shadows of-spring, but by a world (represented by his wife Amanda and her cronies) in denial to challenge the economy.

Rhella's other local director has the touch and grasp, the Bulong, like administration of Pacific had taken local artist would match his misconceiver than Mar to O'Hara?

Pari Sara's memorable, intellectually adroit performance is the finest we've seen in this admittedly young year, and he had exemplary company with him: CB Garabulos (with her as she for us-Hospice), Shelly Lara, Lou Veloso—as fine, evidence to this triumphant production.

Padilla was on hilarious form character for many years before "Bulong Pari." This sly, sophisticated reflection on sub-ject—actor identity, as seen through Gantimpala perspectives of and surrounding, was every inch a way the comeback.

Modest aims

Tony Espejo, artistic director of Gantimpala Theater, had more modest aims for his windfall production of Guerrero's "Forever" and "Call Me Mary"; he wanted to introduce the National drama's comedies to audiences who had become Gantimpala's natural constituency—as in regular staging of "Bong Salarza," "Nicanor at Lou," "Tell Me Tagaro" and "El Filibusterismo."

It was a breath of fresh air to see Espejo tackle two one-act plays of more recent provenance and bring a quiet, earnest touch to both.

"Forever," set in the 1960s, and "Call Me Mary," in the 1970s, are plays in danger of becoming cherished artifacts without any contemporary sensibility informing their staging in the present. Espejo's restrained direction ensured that they never cost brisk and fresh.

In "Forever," for instance, about a married man (Rooder Carmelo) attempting to repair the rift and woo his lost abandoned 16 years ago, the family reunion ended of pace these movie melodrama.

Here, however, the scene achieved eloquent more from its silences and pauses than from any expressive emotionalism. The "reconciled" pair of a single mother (Monica Llamas) living in a less forgiving time was heartfelt, a tense for illuminating sensitivity.

Like "Hali' an Hour in a Lim-ture," "Forever" aroused no Guerrero's humanism, his belief in the art sensitivity in discerning of his characters. But he could saving hand, too, special cast and typecasting, as in "Call Me Mary," which drowned the stories of old aids and neurosis (who alike to "Do Mary").

The play's zero sorting and dramatic premise—an author whom a counselor is conducting a meeting between a long-time secretary pillar and a newly small by interrupt—demanded a uphelping, which J. Dennis Teodosio provided.

He added scenes and characters to heighten the satire, capped by this spotlighted exchange between the ballsy "I don't date with the matrix," stuffed the dolls (Llamas again): "My hands don't direct," referred her maid (Milnes Jocson).

Staging Pari" and "Forever; Call Me Mary" constituted a return of Guerrero-mind-festival. In both cases, adaptation—to quote Ben Beasley of the New York Times—"is not mimicry; its equivalent."

Sory staging

Reinvention also came to mind with Dandelada's spry staging of Rene Villanueva's "Sandaang Pamaypay," directed by Tony Espejo, to open the Actors Theater group's 25th year.

Villanueva's play was written nearly 30 years ago, but you wouldn't know it from the enjoyably English manner by which the fatalistic ensemble performed a song traditional comedic tropes bent out of shape.

This was no longer the tonal tiff between Christina and Mariano. The story—about a long-dust gone to waste through the sins historians of a queen and her two daughters—had become a commentary on the misuse of power. In places, it even reminded of "Ever After," the movie starring Drew Barrymore that took on the Cinderella fairy tale.

In Espejo's staging, the comedia's trademark theatrical tricks and stylized choreography were kept intact, but much of the text were dropped in the 21st-century. The results appeared not a side screen, and part of the tale unfolded as literally as-style visuals.

The gaudiest examples of video and live action, all done while the play was being staged at times in Nelson's Carriers Hall, but most the way it was done to the comedia's heyday), supported an enchanted atmosphere.

The closely knit ensemble sent in the actors, who were delightfully in on the bit-for-bit comedia.

The observe signal that this play wasn't about to traffic in type was R. Calubaquib, who played the nasty Reyna Leona as an astute, amoral woman. Her character wouldn't get her comeuppance in the end, but not before her moment of glory: a musical procession on the balcony, arms waving à la Evita Peron.

Make that Monica Blanco—former Bayanihan dancer and choreographer who was dressed in terno all through out.

A comedia as droll, artful and attuned to pop culture as "Sandaang Pamaypay" deserves to be seen in more open fields around the country.

Sweep and breadth

If "Sandaang Pamaypay" is rooted the comedia, the UP Playwrights Theater's "Bandila ng Kalibdan," with libretto by Eleanor Tampoan, stands by Joy Marfil and direction by Joel Estrella, set to update on-one banding similar remarkable yet form: the musicals.

"Bandila," a musical adaptation of the life of Emilio Tarizon who, in the 1930s, led an unprecedented campaign to win the 20-hour Makabebe to open a night school for girls in their area, represented top-drawer research by Tampoan.

Her library offered sweep and breadth—a flattering diet by its governing Bandila as a woman ahead of her time. The overt understanding of autocratic contentions—the lack of a romantic high, the frustrations and verbal acuity of his mentor, the sanctimonious insecure opinions of the entire enterprise—lives sensitive because of the pleasures and pitfalls it offered.

The play could have easily disordered into untidy puddle. But Estrella's direction accentuated certain non-monotonic montage, the various (by John Abel) and choreography (by Denver Antonio) instantly engaged the eye, and the actors, led by the lovely trio of Ina Feleo (who is Isa Hard), Nicole Estrada and Nikki Mercena—with the sharp Diana Allen as an comic foil—were up to the task of outmanning, with some adjustments, the feel of a vast cultural.

Having said these, the drama out, piecemeal unfolding of history itself not come of the rigor and snap that by eight should have accrued to the epic melodic. If "Bandila" is going for two hours and 45 minutes' running time would not have felt, at least in parts, an imposition.

Also, if its achievements were recorded in the music, then "Bandila" would have to be sung and—Bandila's melodies were the least distinguished element of this production—a gray harmony to an on-cued song, especially Leonardo Cruz's lone ballad piano.

There are a few musical scenes, like the "Manila Kariparan" sensitively morphing into "Bantu Hymn of the Republic" to signal the American invasion. But in the dressing pieces parts than some before; and after such passages, "Bandila" came, unable to leave us, failed to impress.

E-mail the author at gcadiz@inquirer.com.ph, via www.gildacadiz.com

THE CAMEOS give jazzed spin to Amiabilado's "Sandaang Pamaypay," directed by Joey Mesquita.

CB GARRACHO and Maria O'Hara in Manuel Padilla's "Bulong Pari" he fires

ROEDER Carmelo, Vincent Kalaw and Monica Llamas in Gantimpala Theater's "Forever," staged by Tony Espejo

THE WOMEN of UP Playwrights Theater's "Bandilang Makiba," directed by Joel Estrella with libretto by Eleanor Tampoan

Adapting a theater chestnut for a new generation

By Joel Rollins & Mateo
Contributor

Relocating 'Gay Birds' to a '70s Manila setting was more daunting than I thought

WHEN ROBBIE D. Carreon told me Repertory Philippines had given him his first directorial project, I was happy for him. Robbie has been with Repertoire the 1980s and has grown tremendously as an actor over the 20 odd years that I have known him.

He has gone on to join the Sentinel and Hong Kong casts of "Miss Saigon" and has shared his talents and know-how as an actor coach to several generations of hip workshoppers.

When Robbie told me the play he was doing was "Gay Birds," I thought it was a fitting choice for him, since he had played the lead when Rep produced it in 1994. When he told me Rep would do the play as a Filipino adaptation, I asked who was doing the adaptation. Robbie said: "You wanna do it?"

Of course, I wanted to! I did *Rep* musicals for 10 years, from 1991 to 1995, and have been hankering to do theater again for the longest time. Adult preserve parents—such as a full-time career as a lawyer—have limited my theater series to watching plays and musicals.

For always been fond of writing, having been involved in some TV shows of late, and my proudest moment as a writer was when I was commissioned to write a movie script, which was produced and shown the very next year (about "White Lady").

Relocating 'Gay Birds' to a '70s Manila setting was more daunting than I thought

Challenge

In adapt "Gay Birds" to a Philippine setting was quite a challenge. Its original source was, in fact, "La Cage aux Folles" by Jean Poiret, that was given to the early '70s and made into a film in 1978. The play was designed as a farce with the comedy broad and physical, and Robbie's vision was altogether different.

First, we had to make sure that the flavor of the play becomes distinctly "Pinoy," including the type of humor. I suggested to Robbie that the adaptation be set in the period encompassing 1970-1981 because I felt this was a period I was familiar with as I came to Manila for my college education in 1970. Second, that was the time when there was at its peak and Manila was at its most decadent.

Certainly there were numerous references to Cory Aquino, the legendary dancehouse that was more than just that, but we didn't want Red Cage to be Coo Beauties. Every venue in the period—both Pinoy and foreign—was also at its most glorious, as were the dance scenes that we all danced to.

Lastly, I wanted to show not only one aspect of social lifestyle—carnival or the sense of what's who or what's what, but also, what the Marcos administration did and who it did it to. A rather ambitious tasks that is best left to effective media, but we did reference events including in the adaptation.

Robbie wanted to cast Isabella Rivas for the role of Albert (also known, the "mother" of "Gay Birds"). Isabel signified his availability for the play, and I show his commitments overrode his schedule, and Robbie reluctantly had to let him go.

However, his would be otherwise. Glenn Glenn, who worked with Robbie and I when we were cast in Rep play and musicals for almost 15 years, has proven himself worthy of the role.

If there had been a role for me, he would have joined the reunion of Rep actors who were in the 1994 cast of "La Cage aux Folles," the Tony award-winning Broadway musical. Mr. Infante, who was Cagelle, is doing the act; Benito Antolin was Madame Renfrew; and Ian was the "Gay Birds" stage manager and choreographer, and I was also in the company of "La Cage."

Insights

We were lucky in that Robbie had kept his copy of the English translation of "Gay Birds" done by Marijke Amadeo. Reading through it made me realize that the work of adapting it was more daunting than I had thought.

Friends like Linda Lim and Bernardo Bernardo (thank God he's back!) provided insights on "On musicpeak, Dulcinea and Bob, and gay culture. Subsequently, Robbie hired the adaptation, as Robbie and the actors members of laugh lines, helped clarify motivation of characters and smoothed out the musicals' rough edges.

Through it all, Robbie wanted to emphasize the play's main themes of love and family.

On the one hand, the thesis of the late Jean Poiret is disarming and casual. After all, the character of Albert in "La Cage" says in jest "time flies now and all straight men become queens."

But if the viewer were to see through the obvious humor of this play and unravel highlights of the touching relationships of the main characters, George and Albert, he would see their deep and abiding love for their son, christened Jean! in this adaptation.

This is also clear from both the musical and "The Birdcage," the American movie adaptation of "La Cage aux Folles."

I hope this play draws tears from laughter from the audience. In the end, it is only your evening with the "Gay Birds."

"Gay Birds" opens March 16, 17 and 18 at Meralco Theater, 20 E. Rodriguez Ave., Pasig. Call 687-1651 or 687-1650 ext. 2243 for reservations. Tickets: P1,000 (includes dinner and tax), which can be purchased at the box office or on ticketnet.com.

MIMEL Carrion, Jojo Esguerra and Dingdong Rosales in Repertory Philippines' "Gay Birds."

Gantimpala workshops

GANTIMPALA THEATER announces the opening of its 2007 Summer Musical Theater Workshop for Teens and Young Adults.

The 2007 Summer Musical Theater Workshop is open to young men and women ages 13 and above. Classes are on April 11-May 19, every Monday-Thursday. (No and Friday at the Ateneo de Manila University.

Instantly engaged the eye, and the actors, led by the lovely trio of Ina Feleo (who is Isa Hard), Nicole Estrada and Nikki Mercena—with the sharp Diana Allen as an comic foil—were up to the task of outmanning, with some adjustments, the feel of a vast cultural.

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Ballet Manila's 'Romeo and Juliet' is mesmerizing

By Elba Krystle R. Baquiros
Contributor

IN BALLET, YOU either grab or mesmerize your audiences. As a result, you get screams and thunderous applause for the former, or exalted applause for the latter.

Ballet Manila (BM) chose to mesmerize ballet enthusiasts of all ages in an almost full (but not quite) house with Sergei Vikulov's "Romeo and Juliet."

It took some time for the audience to give the ballet a dignified ovation. It seems it just dawned on them that the ballet was regrettably over.

Shakespeare's tale of star-crossed lovers caught between their feuding families was given a basic interpretation by BM artistic director and principal dancer, Lisa Macuja-Elizalde and soloist Rudy de Dios. The two danced harmoniously to Sergey Prokofiev's composition.

Macuja-Elizalde was riveting and fit as ever as Juliet. It was quite difficult to take one's eyes off her whilst she dances. Even the moves Bazon assumed the stage as she entered elicited warm applause from the audience.

At 42, slight-framed Macuja-Elizalde was still able to play a convincing love-struck teenager; her signature pirouettes were effortless, her movements light.

And having ensured the role countless times, the "prima ballerina" of the people's choice received a passion of feelings that her heroine had to go through in all three acts.

Recently promoted soloist Rudy de Dios, meanwhile, a dashing to Romeo. Tall, dark and handsome to tights, the expressive dancer was able to mold the character to his own persona and diligently did salue every good partner should do: throw off his ladies too.

There was still room, though, to make his premiere more full and to stand his ground with (or against) Macuja-Elizalde.

Lorraine Cojoc and Wylene Aguilar alternated as Romeo and Juliet, respectively.

Ravishing

Equally ravishing were the minor characters and the corps de ballet. They soon, people will be simultaneously applauding for them as vital bellerinas and dancers, too.

Soloist Nilo Carreon's ruled of intimate as Tybalt. Dressed in a red and black courtier (with capes) shirt, brushed up hair, he a regular swagger and arch, lynx-like movements effectively established him as the thorn on Romeo's side.

By contrast, Gerardo Francia, as Mercutio was a delight. Playful and naughty, he struck even a winner combination of assets (such sexy as he is) to convincingly anger Tybalt, from his death scene was false loss.

Soloist soloist Artemio Espejo's slightly isolated demeanor and follow Lagnel's Nurse provided comic relief to an otherwise intense and sugary-sweet romance as they flirted with each other and cavorted across the stage.

Gabriella Federi's Lady Capulet was a gazelle in her lovely Gilbal with big flutelle eyes, long limbs and a naturally high arch, this young lady is a dark evil goddesses gents held herself with confidence and gracefulness as befit's elegant mother. Her first limes and extensions of infinite length were awe-inspiring.

The corps' flawless execution were matched appreciatively by the audience. Their impressive appearance equaled those of the main dancers and lured the audience to remain glued to the stage.

"Elemental"

Another legacy in Philippine ballet once described the choreography to BM's "Romeo and Juliet" to "elemental," and rightfully so. Really expected of Vikulov who has over been part of the internationally acclaimed (in France!) Ekcoy Ballet company.

This time, arranged by principal dancer and ballet master Denden Barrera, BM's play is safe and classical tendencies is nevertheless effective in getting the raw feel of a timeless love story.

Barrera, who is still recovering from a spine operation, is the original Benvo of BM's version where it premiered both in the CCP Main Theater and Star Theater in 2005.

Joining with the minimalistic but were De avant-garde backdrops and set design adapted by acclaim ballet master Jonathan Jurado from the original design done by movie industry veteran and set-in Fred Elizalde.

Some of the sets could actually pass for artwork and would not be lost in a sculpture exhibit, such as the huge, red irregularly-shaped window in the balcony scene.

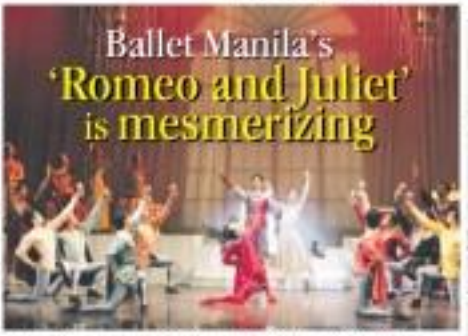
Additional treat

As an added treat for the company's 12th season, science and environmental advocate Chin Chin Gutierrez appeared as the story-reader narrator at the start of each of the three acts.

A gripping (and alluring) tale. Keeping of the production, her intense and dramatic delivery using the Filipino language punctuated for a more readily understood dance interpretation and enjoyed especially by children in the audience.

Previously Ben Alcaraz, the Filipino Embodiment of Gutierrez's narrator was a part of BM's campaign to bring ballet closer to the people.

JAJET (Lisa Macuja-Elizalde) and Romeo (Rudy de Dios) locked in a passionate embrace



TYBALT raises a toast to Paris and Juliet, looking on are proud parents Lord and Lady Capulet.

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Licad teams up with son in PPO concert

From page D1

VIOLINIST Alexandra Tomawo and pianist Mary Anne Espina

"Who is the young artist, I asked the conductor.

"Who would you recommend, he also asked.

"When I brought it up with Cecile Licad, she asked, "Why not with my son, Dante?"

On that note, the mother-and-son music team was born, and you will have them this coming Friday, March 16, at the CCP Main Theater.

What do I think of the mother-and-son team-up?

The first thing that comes to mind with Dante as soloist is the "Fiddler on the Roof" song "Sunrise, Sunset," specifically the line Dad goes: "Was I his little boy? Is he still?"

As a Licad fan blurted out, "Five years Licad already had a son old enough to be an orchestra soloist!"

Olivier Licad Monasat was born 20 years ago to Manileans: while a stage d'etat was in progress in Manila. He was actually named after a character in the Minuet opera, "Don Giovanni."

CECILE Licad with son Dante

The day after she gave birth, Licad checked out of the hospital and started teaching the piano. A few days later, she was off to Japan to fulfill an engagement. If she had her way she would have been in Tokyo with the 2-week-old Dante, but her mother, Rosario Licad, admonished her the baby was too young to travel.

Every day in Japan, while rehearsing and performing, Licad was burning the Tokyo-Manila wires monitoring her 2-week-old baby.

A few years later, I remember Licad recounting her Brahms and Tchaikovsky encounter at the CCP with stroller and feeding bottles in tow.

Dante's first instrument was a baby crib that father was Bradlee, other Antonio Monasit, but after years of watching his mom play the piano, the piano drove rubbed off on him. His first teacher was the Byelorussia-based pianist brother Josef "Tad" Alonzo, who updated me on Dante's progress as a conductor.

But Dante's talent was not just to watch. By age nine, a guest artist and he figured in several school musicals in his elementary and high school years. Four years of subpost-concert conversations saw Dante mimicking Manila's high-society figures complete with exact mannerisms of the personalities.

In one of those outreach concerts in Manila, 3-year-Dante his first solo Bay debut when I asked him to turn the his bedsheet and use Lorna Gimeno' gown while she was singing a "Madamame" aria in the residence of physician Jaime Gonzaga.

His late Rosario would admonish him, "You better act well in that stage appearance because the great Filipino director Ishmael Bernal is in the audience. He might get you as child actor."

Many years later, Cecile would confide to me, "Pebbs, I have to rehearse eight hours a day to get the sound I like. But with Dante, he gets the right sound with just a few token practice. Maybe he is the better pianist."

Well, music lovers will decide when mother and son figure as soloist in the Poulenc Concerto for Two Pianos with the Philippine Philharmonic on March 16, 8 p.m., under the baton of Candles.

First part of the program is Licad as soloist in Ravel's Concerto in G Major while the PPO plays Adam's "Short Ride in a Fast Machine" and Ibert's "Pelleas et Melisand" Suite, Op. 80.

Call 9007923 or 09065184259 for tickets.

Tomawo a hit

The recent private engagements of Romanian violinist Alexandra Tomawo with pianist Mary Anne Espina broke records for standing ovations. To get there at the Philtrustbk Theater and Inn in Pobajan City to Nueva Ecija. In Bacolod City, mesmerized Negrenses headed by singer-composer Joel Mari Ulam gave him four standing ovations at the Provincial Capitol Social Hall.

In Nueva Ecija, we learned that Gov. Tomas S. Joson III recalled visits as a young boy and was, in fact, playing on a fiesta. He never missed no end that Nueva Ecija has a convention center with a theater capacity of 2,000 and the governor lifted it up to the Tomawo recital.

The Bacolod debut of Tomawo was also one of the unforgettable highlights of the National Arts Fair. The gallery owners in the audience headed by Tala Ma Centeno said the concert made her fall in love with classical music many times over.

The Philippine engagement of Tomawo was made possible by the Philippine American Life Insurance Company, Manila Pavilion Hotel and the Provincial Government of Nueva Ecija under Gov. Tomas H. Joson III.

* * *

Russian pianist Gregory Kiamenev, prizewinner of the Cleveland International Piano Competition and three other competitions in Italy, Israel's and Spain, will make his Philippine debut May 7, 8 p.m., at the Philamlife Theater under the auspices of the Philamlife Insurance Company.

His program: Beethoven's Sonata No. 27 in E Minor, Op. 90; Tchaikovsky's Scherzo Humoristic and "Meditation" Op. 72, No. 5; Scriabin's "Gaspard de la nuit"; Ravalin's Sonata No. 3 in F Sharp Minor, Op. 23; and Chopin's Sonata No. 3 in B Minor, Op. 58.

Other events in the new edition of the Great Performance Series at the Philamlife Theater are the Manila debut of classical guitarist Abram Pinzi, gold medalist of three international guitar competitions in France, Brazil and Argentina, on Dec. 4; and the recitary engagement of Russian pianist Ilya Rashkovsky on Dec. 8. For tickets, call 9987827 or 8986-7576/81.

Quach returns

After an absence of many years, conductor Arthur Quach returns to Manila's concert scene with the special engagement of the Manila Symphony Orchestra (MSO) with Cristina Ceylan, to piano soloist in Grieg's Concerto in A Minor. Quach with the MSO will perform on April 22, 4 p.m., at St. Cecil's Hall, St. Scholastica's College, and on April 28, 8 p.m., at the CCP Main Theater. The finale program is Tchaikovsky's monumental Symphony No. 5 in E Minor.

STANDING ovation for Alexandra Tomawo and Mary Anne Espina

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LIFESTYLE

God in a gadget

One of the world's best tech writers unshuffles the addictive history of the Apple iPod in the quirky, compulsively readable "The Perfect Thing"

"The Perfect Thing: How the iPod Shuffles Commerce, Culture and Coolness"
By Steven Levy
Simon & Schuster, New York,
2006, 304 pages)

By Rusti S. De Vera

REVIEW

ONE OF THE MOST ODDLY fascinating images conjured by Steven Levy's "The Perfect Thing: How the iPod Shuffles Commerce, Culture and Coolness" is that of an entire population walking the streets in silence, every single one sporting a pair of white earbuds linked to Apple's iPod, a world of zombies consensually tuning out of the real world and tuning into their own musical cocoon.

That idea drives home the ubiquity and the controversy surrounding Apple's groundbreaking MP3 player, which has efficiently taken over the world since its birth in 2001.

But Newsweek's Levy, one of the world's best tech writers and author of the fantastic "Insanely Great: The Life and Times of Macintosh, the Computer That Changed Everything," unspools not only the history of the iPod but also its impact on society, calling it "a six-ounce entanglement of cultural significance, evoking many things to many people" as well as "a near-universal object of desire."

The development of the iPod is woven closely into the motivations of Apple's iconoclastic CEO, Steve Jobs, who also figured prominently in "Insanely Great." In many ways, "The Perfect Thing" is a sequel to that book, and Jobs' story continues in this volume.

Levy, for example, notes that the iPod in its different avatars—the full-sized iPod, the Mini, the Nano, the iShuffle and the Video—transformed Apple from a computer company into a media juggernaut, noting that "the iPod's astounding success has come from a seemingly uncanny alignment of technology, design, culture and media that has thrust it into the center of just about every controversy in the digital age."

Levy introduces readers to other crucial players in the iPod story, most notably designer Jonathan Ive. As for the iPod's catchy name, Levy explains he "got the distinct impression that the iPod moniker arose not out because of its brilliance but because Jobs had had enough of the name process and the hour was getting late."

"The Perfect Thing" also links the iPod's rise to that of the Sony Walkman decades earlier, but posits the iPod's being the fulcrum to a media revolution that gave birth to the iudacity of downloads, arising how the iPod symbol a nonsensical probability into a "hard market reality."

Levy also retells Apple's iPod-infused hiccups, such as the brouhaha over the iPod's battery life, and the more damning one, the charge that the iPod means people to become isolated from one another, to the point where people lost everyone's become disconnected, hence the dystopian vision of an iPod-pierced society, sort of "to the Clockwork Tunes."

Addiction

The most fascinating aspect of "The Perfect Thing" is Levy's reflection of the iPod's impact on everyday life, as well as the obsessive behavior it engenders, something akin to a drug.

He chronicles rigorous tech as the iPod

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Daring publication

By Constantino C. Tejero

ART MAGAZINES ARE HARD TO COME BY in this country. When even film magazines, which tackle a popular art form, come and go and in spurts—what more with something that deals with a highbrow subject?

They can't compete on a market swamped with glossies, glam publications, **self-help manuals. These publications don't** sell, period. They interest only the cultured, specialists and researchers.

So it's incredibly easy appreciate today then **disappear next month.** A literary magazine has more longevity (though only by a few issues). Obviously, those that remain are the ones subsidized by government agencies and academic institutions.

A daring move then is the publication of Muse, an arts and culture broadsheet which came out in December. It is published by Multiwide Communications "in support of the Cebu Chamber of Commerce & Industry, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, and the Arts and Culture Committee of the League of Corporate Foundations."

It helps that the publisher is Ramonito Orosa Cruz, a business man and corporate person who is also an artist, in fact, he is an award-winning painter with a Fine Arts degree from University of Santo Tomas.

And it also helps that its editor is Alya Honasan, a magazine journalist with a background in theater and art history.

Happy meeting

In a message, Honasan elaborates on this happy meeting of corporate support and cultural presentation: "It's a marriage that's been a long time coming. Corporations have happily become more conscientious about giving back to the communities they thrive in—and what better place to champion than the appreciation of the richness of our national heritage?"

In other words, the publication of this magazine has long been lined.

The result is a glossy with an attractive layout (not too big, not too small), not too thick, not too thin, the paper (here, we gladden) is really pleasing to your (large illustrations, sharp resolution photos, breathing space), and substantial yet readable text (not too academic, as most articles on arts and culture are, but suitable for easy reading, as magazine features should be). There are a few typos here and there, but that's only indicative of a publication's birth pangs.

A nice move is the grounding of the magazine not exclusively in arts and culture but also incorporating travel and cultural tourism in its pages. In fact, its masthead announces it as "inspiring culture and travel."

More importantly, "art" here connotes not just its high-brow applications but also includes "its many different forms, incarnations and interpretations."

Reason for being

The editor's message lays out the publication's raison d'être as well as gives us broad a definition of art as can be: "We hope this magazine provides even more evidence that art is not confined to exuberant rooms and connoisseurships—it finds its greatest significance by becoming a part of everyday life. It may be the conception of a young artist with a unique perspective, or a symphony played by the country's premier orchestra, but they both must work their magic on an audience, though not necessarily a captive one. That's why art can also be a superbly designed chair or an acoustic live performance, or even the remains of an old loom in the Philippine Textile, yielding proof of how an ancient piece of stone helped shape the Filipino's existence hundreds of years ago."

Muse carries an impressive lineup of writers tackling a lot of grabbing topics. Its March-April issue will be launched on March 26, during the opening of publisher Cruz's third solo exhibit of paintings, "Musings," which runs until March 24 in U-II Gallery, L/2, Iwenides, Banilads High Knees, Banilad-cum Global City, Tagaytay.

As bookmarks, the magazine carries a calendar of cultural events and art exhibitions. So, what else is not there for a magazine not to sell?

Martel's 'Between East and West' to be launched

THE CULTURAL EXCHANGES IN the last decades suggest the rise of a global culture, one that is rooted in the traditions of the past as well as the present, and is the heritage of the East and the West.

Yet despite the unprecedented pace of change, certain themes remain constant—women and their varying struggles with identity and independence. So it is America in the 1950s as in present-day Afghanistan; the age-old clash between Islam and the Western world; and love and power from the time of the French renaissance that still resonate today.

There is no statement more powerful and enduring than the arts of a nation. In Thailand, America, Japan or India, the arts speak of a people and the intrinsic and often inextricably connections between art and life. In essence the richest cultures influences of East and West that have come to define their heritage.

People are the cultural ambassadors of today's world. From the Philippines, Singapore and America, in divergent spheres of life—in literature, the visual arts, in diplomacy, in architecture and urban planning—Socrates emeritus Nicholas Pilar, and engagement architect William Lim bring us glimpses of their worlds and leave us with a greater appreciation of present realities as well as the universal aspects of life.

"Between East and West" sheds light on these and other provocative subjects. Written by Tonette Muriel, the book is a collection of essays on the places, themes, and ideas that give meaning to the times we live in, be it art or a myth? Brought to closer together by the forces of globalization and information technology, it explores the melding of the heritage of East and West and the cultural exchanges between them.

Sensory feast

With images from the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Rockefeller Collection of Asian Art, the Freer Museum in Thailand, the Asia Society in New York, and specially commissioned photographs of contemporary Bangkok and New York, the book promises to be a sensory feast.

"Between East and West" is published by Anvil Publications and designed by 2006 National Book Awardee Rodolfino "Jpe" Ramos.

"Looking back at these essays which were written over the last 10 years, it became clear to me that I had to look at the essays again and rewrite them from two different vantage points: that is the merging of cultures in contemporary life, as well as the universal themes that still define everyday life," says Muriel.

"The world has grown closer together as a consequence of globalization and the spread of information technology," she explains. "Yet the Philippines has been busy in cultural interchanges for centuries. I looked back to my parents and realized that those in my generation had grown up with as many of the cultural aspects of both East and West, it was as though we were caught between two worlds, and that explains the title of the book."

Of writing the book, Tonette says, "It taught me that people are more similar than they are different. We all share the same hopes, dreams, loves and aspirations. Yet each culture has a unique way of expressing these realities. We live in a world today that compels us to open our eyes to many truths all at once. I hope the reader will come away with the notion that we are a part of one world—that the cultural imports of East and West and the merging of both will continue to shape our lives and stay with us."

Born and raised in Manila, Muriel received a bachelor of arts degree from Marymount Manhattan College in New York and a Master of Arts degree from New York University.

"Between East and West" will be launched on the evening of March 15, at Red in the Makati Shangri-La, a portion of the book sales during the launch will benefit the Orlando Sweda Fund.

TONETTE R Muriel, author of Between East and West (2007)

New from Jodi Picoult

JODI PICOULT WAS BORN AND raised in Long Island, New York where she admittedly had an uneventful childhood. While studying creative writing at Princeton, she was able to publish two short stories in Seventeen Magazine. It was also getting her first pay check for a story that Picoult realized that she in fact wanted to become a writer.

Achieving her dream, however, **did not come easily. She took stories** of jobs such as an editor and an eighth grade English teacher to create her own anecdotes exposure. Soon after, she entered Harvard to pursue a Master's Degree in Education.

Picoult got married to Tim Barber, whom she met in Princeton during college. Her secret first novel, "Songs of the Humpback Whale" (1992), while she was pregnant with her first child. Announcing her priorities both as a writer and mother is a tough job for she believes that it has also made her better at what she does.

In "Plain Truth" (2000), Picoult presents a story of how a shocking murder of a newborn infant tests the heart and soul of the lawyer who steps in to defend the young mother accused of killing her own child, while the novel "Second Glance" tells the story of a love that transcends the limits of time. In 2003, Picoult was awarded the New England Bookseller Award for Fiction.

Her latest book, "Nineteen Minutes," is a thriller about a high school shooting that took place in an unknown town. Jodi Picoult is the new writer of DC Comics' Wonder Woman series following the departure of Allan Heinberg. Her first issue #49 will hit stands in the latter half of March 2007.

Swarthmore Specialty Store is a complete source bookstore with branches at Greenbelt 1 (721-6420 to 29), Megamall (635-2000 to 39), Alabang Town Center (850-5662) or 53, Glorietta 5 (750-7075), Shangri-La (889-0655/57), Robinson's Place Ermita (525-2339/3249-0486), Mall of Asia (556-0144), and Festival Supermall (850-8222).

JODI Picoult

New books by Narita Manuel Gonzalez

NARITA MANUEL GONZALEZ, wife of the late National Artist HAM Gonzalez, launches three new books—"Divide Call," "A Shooting in the Rain Forest," and "Seven Short Stories"—as well as two other previously published ones, "Tuesday's Nine Pet Is an Iguana" and "Orchestra" during her at the launching ceremony in Vargas Hall at UP are her publisher, Gloria S Rodriguez, of Giraffe Books (right), and writers Vic G. Thiel, Lorna Tolentino Tirol, and Mari Morales.

God in a gadget

From page E1

were one twins, people would try to tease each other so to solve had the author song being played a iPod virus (malicious snagging people for their iPod, the artists outbreak glowing the victims away); as well as the eternal battle between playlists, crowned by a very nuanced discussion of what "realness" really is in terms of taxonomic products.

Levy explains how the iPod transforms everyday life, from digitizing you with your own **adornment soundtrack. The book's somewhat** goofy turn investigating whether or not the iPod asymptomatic "drew an mystical power to choose their songs" and a surprisingly thorough investigation into whether or not the iPod's Shuffle mode really was as random as it claims. A little loosey? Yes. It's linear? Absolutely.

Levy remembers every George W. Bush career (2001, as does Pope Benedict XVI. Levy even remembers what Microsoft CEO Bill Gates used upon examining the iPod for the first time: "It's only for Macintosh?"

By the day when John decided that the iPod was the best service "Windows users in real" was identified as a computer virus, one that enabled the iPod to truly be dominant, leading to what is now called, of course, "the iPod economy."

All that is serious in Levy's exhaustively researched yet extremely reader-friendly prose. Her amusing cautions about where it really came from, "The Perfect Thing" is a rousing read, a compulsively readable tale of technology.

And to illustrate and embody the iPod's charm, Levy even names "The Perfect Thing" into a shuffle of a book. He wrote the later chapters in he self-contained, coming up the chapters as the book ran on the process. So the very two capitol of Steven Levy's "The Perfect Thing" mirror just possess a different order of chapters—yet remarkably reads the same. Just perfect.

Available in hardcover from National Book Store.

Search for scholars and young musicians

THE UNITED WORLD COLLEGES, IN COORdination with the United World College-Philippines, is now accepting applications for two top-caliber fourth year high school students who are interested in pursuing a two-year international baccalaureate course abroad.

One of the scholars must also be a gifted young musician (between 16-18 years old) who is a pianist or a string player (violin, viola, or cello) with a musical background in classical music and performance.

In the past, Filipino scholars have been sent to UWC: in Canada, Hong Kong, Italy, USA, Wales, and Swaziland. For school years 2007-2009, two Filipino students will be nominated for a full tuition scholarship to the Li Po Chun UWC of Hong Kong, while the musically gifted student will receive a full tuition scholarship to the UWC of the Adriatic in Italy. The scholarships cover tuition, board, lodging and health insurance.

Applicants for Li Po Chun UWC must belong to the Top 10 percent of their class. Applicants for UWC of the Adriatic will be screened primarily on musical criteria but will also be interviewed on their readiness to participate fully in the college's academic, multicultural and community service programs.

Interested students and their parents should visit www.ph.uwc.org or learn more about the program and the scholarships, and to download application forms. They may also contact Gillian Torres at tolwish@i.ph.net, or telephone 8356281 to request a form by e-mail or fax, and for more information. Deadline for submission of application forms is March 22.

Must-read book for March

THE MUCH-ANTICIPATED follow-up to the popular and best-selling "Shopaholic" series by Sophie Kinsella hails the return of heroine Becky Bloomfood (née Bloomwood) now married, pregnant and working as head personal shopper for a hip, new boutique.

"Shopaholic and Baby," the latest installment of the "Shopaholic" franchise, finds consumerically insatiable Bex overjoyed as she shops for two lovely spreads: baby shop and catalogue in London. She wants it all for her positive-for-her baby, and she snaps everything from a designer nursery, celebrity-must-have obstetrician, to a pair of the moment's most-coveted boots.

But when the celebrity obstetrician turns out to be her husband Luke's glamorous, ex-fellow-coast-to-gle friend, Becky's perfect world momentarily crumbles. Complicating an otherwise uneventful pregnancy, Becky begins to suspect that Luke is hearing an affair. So she hires a private detective to track down the truth, which naturally sets off a mashup romp that turns Becky's world upside down.

For chick lit enthusiasts with babies of their own, or for those who covet one, Kinsella mixes a rich recipe by translating 21st-century glossy-magazine obsessions: economic (to better help strollers and trifled-out birthing rooms. Kinsella's ode to baby bliss is both sly and slapstick.

The book is available at PowerBooks Ayala Ave., which has branches in Greenbelt 4 (757-6226/29), Megamall (632-2898/99), Alabang Town Center (850-9562/63), Glorietta 3 (752-3373), Shangri-La (638-9823/25), Robinsons Place Ermita (522-5326/5265/68), ADC (5686364) and festivalsupermall (8500221).

12 fellows for the 46th UP National Writers Workshop announced

LIBOTAN: THE UP INSTITUTE of Creative Writing announces the 12 fellows selected for the 46th UP National Writers Workshop to be held at the AIM Lodge, Camp John Hay, Baguio City, March 25-April 1.

The fellows are: Eutima F. Tayona and Cheryll Ann Delgado (fiction in English); Conchitina Cruz and Mark Anthony Cayanan (poetry in English); Lawrence Ypil, Ivanhoe Nicole Beldon and Adam David (creative nonfiction in English); Eugene Evasco and Ivan Andrie Olivares (fiction in Filipino); Jerry Gracio and Edgar Samuel Quarry in Filipino); and Joel Donero Bocobono Librarian in Filipino).

Like the fellows of last year's Lovelaced workshop, the fellows for this year are advanced writers with previous workshop experience, publications or degrees in Literature or Creative Writing. The fellows have submitted one work for critical evaluation by the group. They will also be expected to make a presentation about a work in progress and their own writing practice.

The workshop panel for this year's workshop will include UP ICW director Ma. Nadera, J. Neil Garcia (this year's workshop director), professor emeritus Ofelia R. Abad, National artist and professor emeritus Bienvenido Lumbera, National Artist and College of Arts and Letters dean Virgilio S. Almario, Cristina Pantoja Hidalgo, Jose T. Bellaty Jr., Charlson L. Ong, Carlo Pinto, Jun Cruz Reyes, Lilia Quindoza Santiago, Ricardo M. de Ungria, Roland Tolentino, and Rene O. Villanueva.

The chosen fellows are advised to call the UP ICW at 9221830 or call/ DMI/Ate Gerrie Cuaño at 0927-3345161 to confirm attendance and receive further instructions.

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BOOKS AND ROSES

Instituto Cervantes hosts World Book Day

ON APRIL 23, THE INSTITUTO Cervantes in Manila will join all the universal celebrations on World Book Day by organizing a series of cultural events open to the general public.

A day of books and roses... Although not celebrated in the Philippines, the International Day of the Book is an important event in several European countries like Spain, and Instituto Cervantes aims to establish the date as a tradition in the Manila cultural calendar.

The International Day of the Book (or World Book Day) is a yearly event organized every April 23 to promote reading, publishing and the protection of intellectual property through copyright. The idea of this celebration originated in Catalonia, Spain, where on St. George's Day males send females traditionally exchange a rose for the gift of a book.

This tradition inspired a Spanish delegation, supported by some 20 other countries, to propose to the Unesco a resolution requesting the proclamation of April 23 of each year as "World Day of the Book." It was unanimously adopted in November of 1995 and celebrated ever since. The 23rd of April was also considered as it is a symbolic date in world literature. Curiously in the year 1616 on this very date died literary legends Miguel de Cervantes, William Shakespeare and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. It also happens to be the date of birth or death of other prominent authors: Maurice Druon, Halldór Laxness, Vladimir Nabokov, Josep Pla and Manuel Mejía Vallejo.

In celebration of this special occasion, Instituto Cervantes will organize a whole-day Open House with many fun activities like concerts, film showings, Spanish food like photo and declamation contests on April 23, 10 a.m. 11 p.m. It will begin with a book blanket where Instituto Cervantes will offer at token prices over 4,000 brand-new books.

Aside from the Instituto Cervantes, the courtesy will include a sale of books by popular Filipino publishing firms and leading bookstores at 20 percent off. Also following the tradition dating the ban of the Book in Spain, a rose will be gifted to every book buyer!

Guided tours of the Instituto Cervantes building will be organized at 11 a.m., 12 noon, 1 p.m., 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. You can also get the chance to attend a free Spanish class for beginners! A 20 percent discount off the regular price awaits new students who enroll on this day! (Only valid for certain schedules and full payment).

And for poetry lovers, a Poetry Reading Contest will be organized at the patio of Instituto Cervantes 4:30 p.m. El Mejor Nombre/The Best Name invites poetry lovers to bring their favorite poets and read it aloud! There will be two categories: Spanish and Other Languages. Cool prizes await the winners! Those interested can sign up at 526-1482 ext. 105 (look for Mimi).

Special movie screenings with the theme Great Books on Screen will start 11 a.m. Films based on literary works will be projected on the Salón de Actos (movie schedule is as follows: 2 p.m. — "El Lazarillo de Tormes" directed by A. Bigas Luna in 1987; 6 p.m. — "El Mismo Mar" directed by Manuel Pilares in 2000).

Kids will also have the chance to enjoy three Spanish stories for children (at 2:30 a.m., 2 and 5 p.m.). Sassy lassador! Puertoo wee singing abilities in Spanish! Is tu el Spanish lalander well for us! 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.

And in the evening, to top off the exciting day, Instituto Cervantes will host the Día del Libro Fiesta with a Latin band, a jazz concert, Spanish food... and lots of fun!

INSTITUTO Cervantes director José "Pepe" Rodríguez with veteran columnists Rosalinda Orosa

First winners of Quijano de Manila Award announced

VETERAN COLUMNIST ROSALINDA Orosa of the Philippine Star and popular historian Ambeth Ocampo of the Philippine Daily Inquirer are the first winners of the Primer Premio de Periodismo Quijano de Manila (1st Quijano de Manila Journalism Award) in a ceremony held at the Instituto Cervantes Library.

The awards were handed out by Instituto Cervantes director José "Pepe" Rodríguez during ceremonies at the new Instituto Cervantes building on 130, Salcedo Street, Legaspi, Manila.

Launched in 2005 by the Embassy of Spain and the Instituto Cervantes in Manila, the journalism prize was named in honor of Archbishop Antonio Sitoy Aragón, who never spoke the pen name Quijano de Manila. It has for its theme the significance of Spanish as an international language as well as its special interest for Philippine "Hispanicists or Spanish culture in Today's World."

Orosa won the first prize of P75,000 for her piece "A Treatise for Spanish," published in Starweek magazine on Nov. 27, 2005. Ocampo, who chairs the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, was awarded the second prize of P25,000 for his column essay "Signs of vibrancy" in the November 20, 2005, issue of the Inquirer.

A third prize, Bonggoy Bernabe's "Si Rizaleti, Ciri Spanish Si Noche," was given an honorable mention for its originality and in its ability to convey information with clarity.

Entries considered for the award were those published in Philippine newspapers, newspapers in Mindanao and local radio or television, and submitted to Instituto Cervantes on Jan. 1, 2005-Jan. 18, 2006.

AMBETH Ocampo

Pagsanjan celebrates heritage Bangkero Fest

PAGSANJAN WILL HOST THE SIXTH Pagsanjan Bangkero Festival March 15-16.

According to Mayor Jesiqui Hill Sjoustrand, the festival, with this year's theme "Pagsanjan Fiesta! Kalikasang Yaman... Tikas at Husay Mandin!," advocates environmental protection and the promotion of local tourism.

Pagsanjan, which once served as provincial capital of Laguna, is home to historic spots such as the century-old Magsaysay Arch or royal gate, ancestral homes, and the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the town's patroness.

The festival includes a host of activities such as a marathon, boat races, fluvial and land parades and a showcase of local delicacies, and other sporting and special events.

There will also be the search for the Ginoo or Binibining Pagsanjan, the Crowning Bangkero 2006 and the Inter-School Calendar challenge to say local colors.

The festival's highlight is on March 16, with dance exhibitions, the final round of the boat race, native games and the colorful fluvial parade competition on the scenic Pagsanjan River.

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And the

2006 car of the year is...

At the 3rd Car of the Year Philippines (Coty P) awards dinner held March 8 at the Rockwell Tent, Makati, 11 category winners, four Special Award winners and the Car of the Year 2006 was proclaimed, finally ending months of suspense.

The Awards Night followed seven weekends of instrumented and qualitative testing of 47 motor vehicles that ran in November 2006 and continuing in January and February 2007 at the Puerto Azul Golf and Country Club in Ternate, Cavite.

The Honda Civic 1.8S emerged tops during these tests, and was consequently awarded overall as the car of the year for 2006.

In its respective sub-categories, the following vehicles were also awarded: the Kia Rio in the sub-compact category; the Honda Civic 1.8S in the compact category; the Mazda 6 2.3L in the executive sedan category; the Volvo S60 2.0T in the luxury car category; the Mercedes-Benz E280 Elegance in the Ultra-Luxury category; the Mitsubishi Strada GLS in the pick-up category; the Toyota Innova for the entry-level MPV category; the Mitsubishi Grandis for the luxury MPV category; the Subaru Forester 2.5XT for the entry-level SUV; the Subaru Outback 3.0R for the luxury SUV category, and the Mercedes-Benz ML 350 for the ultra-luxury SUV category.

Special award winners were the Honda Civic 1.8S for best value for money; the Mercedes-Benz E280 for best safety package; the Nissan Murano for best overall design; and the Audi A6 3.0 TDI Quattro for best technical innovation.

Coty-P now on its third year, was initiated by the Car Awards Group Inc (Cagi), a non-stock, non-profit organization of motoring journalists from various newspapers, car magazines, television car programs and online media. Cagi maintains its independence and avoids any conflict of interest by not seeking or accepting financial support from car manufacturers and by not charging them an entrance fee for participation in Coty.

Cagi board

The 2006-07 Cagi board of directors consists of Aida Sevilla Mendoza, Philippine Daily Inquirer motoring columnist, president; Alvin Yu of motorcars.com.ph, vice president; Leslie Dimen, editor of Motorcycle Magazine, treasurer; Jon Isaiah, Roberto Consunji, 4x4 Off Road editor of Top Gear, secretary.

-DAN YU

And the 2006 car of the year is . . .

From page F1

TAKASHI Sekiguchi, Honda Cars Philippines president, proudly holds plaque after bagging the coveted Car of the Year award at the Rockwell Test.

AIDA Santika Manahan, left, president of the Car Awards Group Inc, and Eric Tagle of Philippine Allied Enterprises, hand over the trophy to Sekiguchi.

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and Avis E. Bogan of Manila Bulletin, public relations officer.

Cagi founding president Arnulfo Aruiza, managing editor of Autoindustriya magazine and 2005 Oh Cagi president Manny de los Reyes, editor-in-chief of Sport magazine and Philippine Star motoring page contributor, make up the Cagi committee of honors.

The Cagi scoring committees – which set the scoring guidelines, supervised the instrumented and qualitative tests and tallied the votes cheered out amazing hero the cars — was headed by Top Gear technical editor Preman Law with Ulysses Ang of motoringasia.com and Inquirer motoring columnist Andrew Pelicano as members. The lady sheets and results were audited by Isaac Cortez Velasco & Co (ICVC) before the winners were announced.

Cagi voted production cars that were available on the market during the preceding year. Thus, the Cars P nominees predominated in the 1st Car of the Year Awards Night on Feb. 24, 2005 were vehicles sold in the Philippines in 2004, and the winners of the 2nd Cody Awards on March 10, 2006 were cars and trucks sold here in 2005.

Entries that do not win in their respective categories are excluded from the next Cars P voting (they have undergone major engineering changes or have new safety equipment. That partially explains why there were fewer entries for the 2nd Cars P Awards — models in that same models that could have participated in the 3rd Cars P were cancelled, having been sold out before the vote began.

A month or so before the votes start, Cagi informs car manufacturers about the test schedule that is arranged according to category over a period of six or seven weekends. For the 3rd Cars P, the test segments were held at a closed-off area within the grounds of the Forest Hills Golf and Country, which was also the test venue for the 2nd Cars P. But this time a longer, more challenging route for the tests was staked out by the test marshals. Applied Leisure is Sales and Operations Office group members and former rally racers Raul Asuncion, Joey Lanuza, Gino Reyes and Barry Ocita.

Entries

The entries for the March 6 awards fell within 13 categories based on segmented retail price (SRP): Subcompact Car (P750,000 and below): Chevrolet Aveo, Chevrolet Spark, Hyundai Eon (2005 Subcompact Car of the Year), Kia Rio and Suzuki Swift;

Compact Car (P750,000 up to P1,190,000): Ford Focus Trend, Honda Civic, Mitsubishi Lancer (2005 Compact Car of the Year);

Executive Car (P1.1 million – P2.8 million): Honda Accord, Mazda6 (2005 Executive Car of the Year and 2005 Car of the Year), Mitsubishi Galant (2000), Subaru Legacy, Toyota Camry;

Luxury Car (P2.8 million – P4.0 million): Audi A6 1.8 TFSI, Chrysler 300C (2005 Luxury Car of the Year), Volvo S60;

Ultra-Luxury Car (P4.0 million – P6.0 million): Audi A6 2.8 TDI, Mercedes-Benz E200 Kompressor. No one of the 2005 winner in this category, the BMW 530i, was available for testing;

Entry-Level Sport Utility Vehicle or SUV (P1.6 million and below): Hyundai Santa Fe, Kia Sportage, Honda Tribute (2005 Entry-Level SUV of the Year), Subaru Forester, Suzuki Grand Vitara, Toyota RAV4;

Luxury SUV (P1.6 million – P4.0 million): Honda Pilot, Jeep Commander, Nissan Murano, Subaru Outback;

Ultra-Luxury SUV (P4.0 million – P6.0 million): Mercedes-Benz ML320 CDI. Ultra-Luxury SUV of the Year);

Entry-Level Multipurpose Vehicle or MPV (P1.2 million and below): Toyota Avanza, Toyota Innova (2005 Entry-Level MPV of the Year);

Luxury MPV (P1.2 million and above): Chrysler Pacifica, Mitsubishi Grandis (2005 Luxury MPV of the Year), Toyota Previa;

Pickup Truck: Ford Ranger (2005 Pickup of the Year), Mitsubishi Strada.

Special awards

Best value for money winners based on the good "bang for the buck" while remaining good levels of comfort, refinement and utility.

Best safety package winners ultimately make the occupants safe in case of an accident with its comprehensive list of both passive and active safety features.

Best in overall design winners blend both beauty and ergonomics in one seamless and well-thought-of package.

Best technical innovation winners contain at least one innovation that leads to better performance for the driver.

Winners displayed at Phiex

The category winners and the Car of the Year will be displayed at the Manila International Auto Show (Mias) at the Pacific Trade Center from March 29 to April 1. Medallion Services International, the organizer of Mias, is the main sponsor of the 3rd Cody Awards Night, while Rockwell Land Corp is the venue sponsor.

The 3rd Cars P was made possible by the continuing support of Automobile Association Philippines (AAP), Road Safety Partner of Car of the Year 2006; Petron Corp, Fuel Partner; Bridgestone, Polytainer Tire Partner; and Sony Ericsson, Mobile Phone Partner; together with San Miguel Corp, Manila Stock Technology Inc, Standard Insurance Co Inc, Spoolfab and Forest Hills Golf and Country Club.

GARFIELD — By Jim Davis

A. LIPIN — By Jess Abrea

BABY BLUES — By Jerry Scott

PUGAD BABOY — By Tim Lincoln

NUTTS — By Patrick McDonnell

LOVESHOTS — By Elizabeth Chiokilo

ATOMO AND WEBBY — By Lyra Garcellano

DAVINE COMEDY — By Steven Panlilio

MIKO MACHINE — By Mavis Abrea

MIKOKOSMOS — By Jomike Tejido

TULOOK — By Mafi and Tatum Hilarbling

BEN — By Daniel Shelton

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Expert, briefly
4 It's often run
9 Exclaim
14 Inventor's assistant
15 Co-Between
16 Nobelist Wiesel
17 Impoverished
18 Tax-deferred inits.
19 Everything in store
21 "Tack head's up"
22 Metallic shavings
25 Mouth-like
26 Math units
30 Pass blame
31 Hardly
32 Complete fool
33 Add to the accumulation
34 Missionary destinies
36 Cologne
38 Barricade, for one
40 Lofty poems
41 Overcast and cold, e.g.
43 Bronx-bred
44 Reflexes
46 Answer on doorbell
49 Last season's champions
51 Hen's
52 Arrogant personality
53 Liquor prefix
54 Squash or squeeze
55 Before, of yore
56 Zones
57 Ignorant
58 Blushing

DOWN
1 Lost their head
2 Playful prefixes
3 Lobbying breakup
4 Clothes-tidy aware
5 Back in time
6 Mandy workers
7 Leaves tree
8 Cereal
9 Came by
10 Chile soil type
11 Lot size
12 Gender
13 Boxing blow
21 Overboard
23 Mountain
24 Wash
27 Unadorned
28 Lacrosse or hockey
29 Disparages, in a way
31 Tolstoy and Conway
35 Chain
36 Cafe celebration
37 Crochet variety
39 Military D. C.'s
40 Lawyer's
42 Mother ships
43 Cereal
45 In isolated pairings
47 Complement piece
48 Ivory Coast
51 Google for something
52 Accomplish
53 Road
54 Jumped
55 Mentholated drop
57 "Rented All" Parkland shows

By Norma Steinberg
San Francisco, CA

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: Many of you are multitalented. You're competitive, most loving actor Kevin Kline, but he's taught his children to root for the Jets. You love to share others' love for music because Kelly Rowland's fan recollection for you. The one about positive wonderful representations for actors, comedians and many artists, including you, actress Elizabeth Taylor, singer Kevin Kilbert, actor Lily Mirandi, singer Jon Bon Jovi.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Your loyal and fearless warrior may be a bit too much for you right now. There are major building up within you to do something of value. You want adventure, and you want it now!

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) You're not afraid to make mistakes, but you don't like to. Today, you may find yourself quiet whenever you normally would be outspoken and outspoken when you normally would be quiet.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Be careful with your words today. Your intellect is not connected with partners, and others' feelings today. Your intellect is not connected with partners, and others' feelings today. Don't jump up and down excessively.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) You have a great sense of adventure in the workplace today. Your desire to achieve creates problems at work. Don't exhaust yourself and what is no longer really needed.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22) You're a natural leader, but you're not always up with the times. Take it easy. Don't be afraid to ask for help. The more people you have around you, the more you can get done.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22) Be careful with funds. Some people are dishonest, especially today. Don't let them take advantage of you. Protect what's yours, but don't be overly suspicious.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22) You're tempted to do something that you know is not in your best interest. Don't take the risk. Although you're very persuasive right now, why not like the situation that presents itself?

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21) You're very upset about financial matters today. You won't succeed in doing. That's why there's a good deal of money stuck and under an illusion.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21) You have a great desire to do something today. Don't overdo it. Get some rest. Don't overload yourself. Don't worry about what someone else is doing. Take something really positive. Get to work!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19) You're a good day to research anything. If you're interested in learning, you will find it. You're talented when it comes to writing and publishing.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18) A friend might be in someone else's ear today, or maybe you're the one. Today, you might want to ask yourself if it's really that important. Be careful of the things and the people around you.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20) Be careful about what you say to others today. You're not a good day to try to solve misunderstandings between

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku — by Dave Green

			2	8				
	8	3		6		4	5	
	1	7			5	2	8	
		8						4
5	9			3			1	2
7						5		
	6	4	7			8	2	
	2	5		4		3	6	
				2	3			

Difficulty Level ★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

6	3	9	4	2	1	7	5	8
7	1	8	5	6	3	2	4	9
5	4	2	7	8	9	3	1	6
9	7	3	6	5	2	1	8	4
2	8	5	1	4	9	3	6	7
4	6	1	8	3	7	2	9	5
8	2	7	9	1	6	5	4	3
3	9	6	2	5	4	8	7	1
1	5	4	3	7	8	6	2	9

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

FROM BOOK TO FILM

Graphic novel gets graphic screen treatment

By Denise R. Matilla
Contributor

FILM ADAPTATIONS OF COMIC BOOKS or graphic novels, as they are now more popularly called) seem to be the prevailing trend nowadays. But while some have been nothing more but disappointments, there are those that transcend the way movies are made. They become instant classics, as some would say, that have the ability to mesmerize the audience's attention right till the opening scene.

Frank Miller's "300" is one such exception from run-of-the-mill adaptations of graphic novels. Based on the story of the Battle of Thermopylae in 480 BC, the movie follows King Leonidas (Gerard Butler) and his 300 Spartans in their battle against Persian king Xerxes (Rodrigo Santoro) and his army of a hundred nations.

The scene of events is triggered after Leonidas refuses to submit to Xerxes' whims and, despite the advice of the Ephors, prepares to march his army.

Director Zack Snyder, who worked on "Dawn of the Dead," said a huge factor in shooting the film's visual tone involved adapting the artists to make the illustrations "look like a painting."

The heavy use of blue screen made it easier to do just that and literally translate the look and feel of the comic book into the film. Visual effects art director Grant Freckelton, whose style guides were used for the film, said he had to create still concepts based on frames from the book to effectively bring Miller's and colorist Lynn Varley's visual styles to life.

It is important to note that "300" isn't merely a sumptuous opus that relies on its imagery for lack of depth and story. Unlike "The Matrix," which consistently has smart-ass perhaps as the uneven distribution of lengthy dialogue in one film and the barrage of action sequences in another, the use of light conversational and sometimes sarcastic language in "300" helped balance the gore by choosing a smart and funny side to the Leonidas character.

It may have helped that Snyder was fit for the role, whether delivering deadpan humor or whether rousing his army by bellowing lines that thankfully didn't come out corny.

One particular interesting subplot not found in the book that's worth mentioning is Leonidas' wife Queen Gorgo's (Lena Headey) attempt to secure support for reinforcements and more soldiers to aid the king and his army. Snyder's decision to add the subplot served as a welcome breather from all the action in the film.

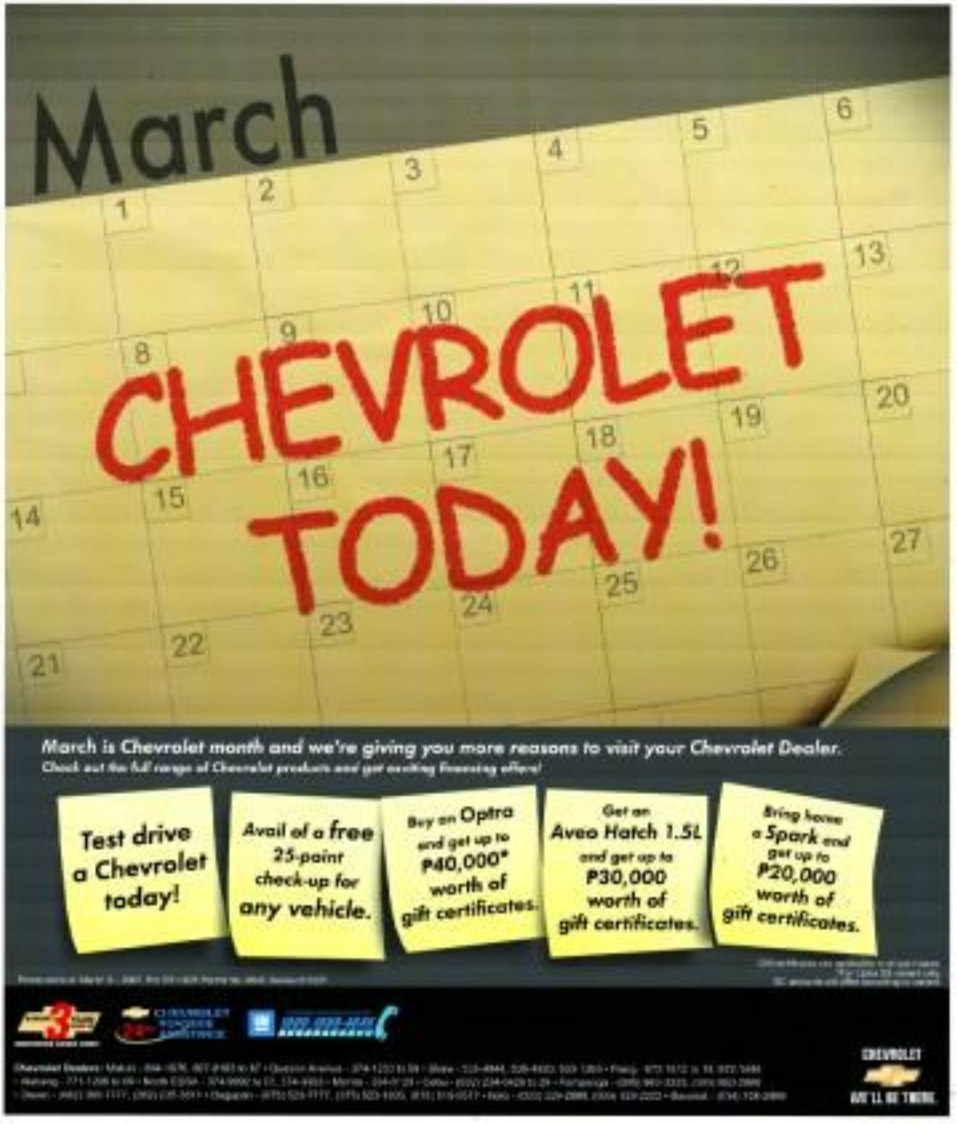
"With an equal mixing of well-thought scripts and convincing visuals, Snyder and the producers of "300" may have studied and learned from the mistakes committed by previous comic book inspired movies and did everything right with this film.

While Spielberg's "The Matrix" gave us a peek into the limitless possibilities that movies are capable of eight years ago, Leonidas and "300" just reset the standards by kicking the door wide open.

E-mail the author at dmatilla@yahoo.com

DEMISE offers Leonidas wealth and power in exchange for the Spartans surrender.

LEONIDAS kicks Xerxes' messenger, setting off the chain of events.



ENTERTAINMENT
Editor Erwin G. Velarde

Piolo has eyes set on int'l stardom

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

ACTOR PIOLO PASCUAL considers movie-watching his ultimate indulgence.

"I'm really boring," he confesses. "That's my only hobby."

In spite of his celebrity, Piolo insists on going to the movie house, as he can watch on the big screen.

He often goes to the cinema that's in the same mall as the church he attends, but when he wants a little peace and pampering, he opts for a certain upscale theater. "When I go there, I feel as if I own the entire place," he says.

How does he dodge screeching fans? "I go in the afternoon, when there are only a few people."

Dream movie

Piolo talks enthusiastically about the movies he has been recently—all foreign—starring with "The Holiday."

"I liked it," he says, "(though) it made me miss Los Angeles (where he lived for a while during his college years)."

He gives "Babel" a rave thumbs up: "It was really good."

Mel Gibson's "Apocalypto" was a disappointment for him. "The building was good, but it took a nosedive towards the end. The ending was lame."

Piolo looks up to Gibson as filmmaker, though. "There were glimpses of 'The Passion of the Christ' in 'Apocalypto'—spiritual, by the sacred and top shots. Cinematically, technically, executive-wise, it was impressive. One thing about Mel Gibson, he wants everything in his films look as real as possible. I'm also like that," he says. "I want to be involved in films like 'Babel' and 'Apocalypto.'"

He says his dream movie is now within reach.

Co-prod

"It's a long-delayed international film called 'Paradise.' It will finally push through," he reports.

In one scene, 1950s LDS stars Nora Aunor and Lilia Dizon were also attached to the project, which revolves around a beauty pageant for senior citizens.

Star Cinema, Piolo's home studio, is coproducing it with Hollywood-based Filipino-American filmmaker Romeo Jocoy, he relates. "I told my friend Romeo that I could do it only if Star Cinema is involved. I don't want any trouble. Star won't lend me to Bonoc, unless it's co-production."

It's a dream come true, Piolo confesses.

"But it's not just about being noticed by Hollywood; it's about being finally allowed to do something for the international market," he clarifies.

Challenging

As hottest, the title of an Ani-Ani is "Offlimit sa Kalibugan," he says. "It requires me to speak English not only fluently but with an American accent...It's quite a departure ... I'm so flying free the character is born and raised in the US."

He's looking forward to the change of pace.

"I can't get it out of my mind. That's where the excitement comes from. To be able to do something out of the box. Something far from your real characters. I'm all for that," he points out.

Before he makes the big leap to Hollywood, he is starring between stars ABS-CBN projects: the song upon tentatively titled "Walang Kapalit" with Claudine Barretto and the movie with the working title "I Finally Found Someone," with Regine Velasquez.

Also in the works is a movie with Angel Locsin, a primer salvo of cine-comedy Club 7, as he is co-produced by Regal and Star Cinema.

Nasty rumors

He also dreams of working with Sharon Cuneta. "I'm a fan," he admits. In the meantime, he is teaming up with fellow Beach man Sam Milby for the tour and repeat of their successful concert "Unorthodox."

"We had a show in Pampanga and there's a repeat in Araneta Coliseum on March 17," he says.

As for nasty rumors (including the one that links him with Aunt), Piolo is unperturbed.

"I've learned how to shrug off [gossip] and pray for the (rumor mongers). Maybe they just don't know any better," he says.

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G2
Promising premise
"YOU GOT ME!," SM CINEMA'S LATEST ROMANTIC-comedy, opts for a "love triangle" format in a rather unusual setting—a police precinct.
VIEWFINDER
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THEATRE MALL
PROMENADE
NOW SHOWING!
MTRCB PG-13
EVIL IS IN THE AIR
DEAD PEOPLE 2

e compromised by unreal execution

...seems taken over again, and we're stifled and frustrated every time.

'TNHT'

Let's really list the music of 'The Manny Pinto Show' as Solar Entertainment brings them back to 'TNHT,' the first all-OPM-oriented flip. That being said, they claim together again to flip in array of necessary hell lives as taking over the main planet.

'Really Big Things'

Beginning March 22 at 8 p.m., Discovery Channel airs the "Really Big Things," a new series that profiles the latest meetings of massive man-made machines that keep our world moving. The show is hosted by Marc Bogan, one of the finalists of Season 3 of "American Idol."

Taking viewers across the globe, 'Really Big Things' serves in on massive machines of all kinds—from the world's largest windmill turbine in Germany to the largest telescope in Arizona, USA.

Feedback

A reader on our 'RD, 24 pieces on top rating TV shows "four column made on stations from are done ratings determined? And, how reliable are they? I have been a television over since I can remember, but I have never been asked to be a respondent. I prefer to watch. I have also not seen anybody who has been part of any such survey.

"I am perplexed because neither I nor my family and friends watch those so-called highly rated Channel 7 shows.

"Our television units are based on one transcript of the ratings? I've noticed that all TV are on hours going to and from south of Metro Manila are aware of channels to Channel 7. I may add I don't know if it's true that those are are supplied by GMA 7. What's the foundation on this?

"Thank you for your very interesting articles on a lot of topics."

Josh Groban

Warner Music Philippines has worked out a collaboration with ASIA DNS Rotary 150 for donating the sale of the single and Album of Josh Groban's "You Are Loved (Don't give up)," to all promotional platforms. A part of the proceeds from the sales of 'Awake,' Groban's new album, was donated to the foundation during the formal turnover and album launch last Feb. 26.

'About 1%'

Airing on Channel 2 beginning at 10 a.m. is "Something About 1%," a light comedy drama welcome by Quest Go Sino, one of Korea's top selling entertainment authors, and starring major stars Kim Jeong Hun and Kang Dong Won. The new series is also...
...release every Sunday at 10 a.m.

"YOU GOT Me" cast Sam Pillo, Yen Gimenez and Zanjoe Marudo with director Cathy Garcia-Molina (third from left)

ia Guanio likes . . . From page G6

...versa discussion, like when people ...t agree with our top five or top ...e choices."

...r favorite episode, she says, is ...lowing of kids' idols—from their ...ntic singers to their favorite ...r character or their favorite ...ays here.

...-opener

...n polite see this a survey ...ed by AC Nielsen Philippines, a ...arch company showed that 'in ...ers of the 84 million population ...e Philippines are children aged 9 ...s.

...n Pia, the episode was an eye ...ner, showing how young the pop... ...thetic and feels by exploiting ...nfant and desires that kids today ...ssess.

...e found out that the favorite ...ime of kids is watching TV and ...percent of households in the ...ippines have television sets," she ...s. "So I'm sure to shows that give in... ...ation will help our young people ...n a lot."

...s, who describes herself as an ...ocol, says she brings her own ...d of precautions to the shows she ...ears, be it the shows his wife ...e "G-Force," "Chika Minute" or ...Time," or the variety show "Eat ...ge!"

...n training

...ty training is to come and convince ...m," she notes. "I had been pres... ...n before I got caught in the en... ...ainment business. I don't think of ...myself as a young show. We are ...ays very candid, and we really en...

everything before airing the material. We don't air anything that we just heard or read about. That's why I can do news programs. Because of the reputation for credibility that I've earned it."

The old soul in Pia is perhaps one reason that she and Vic, who is 10 years her senior, click as a couple.

"I like jazz, big band, 'the Beatles,'" she says. "I have interests that are more of my generation.

"Because of my personality, I find that I need a man who has had a hard road. I debated a lot—conversations, wisdom, answers issues. Vic is good in terms of the way [the relationship] works. He also makes me laugh when I'm sad—sensitive kid. He has a knack for delivering the most ridiculous line with a straight face."

Face-to-face

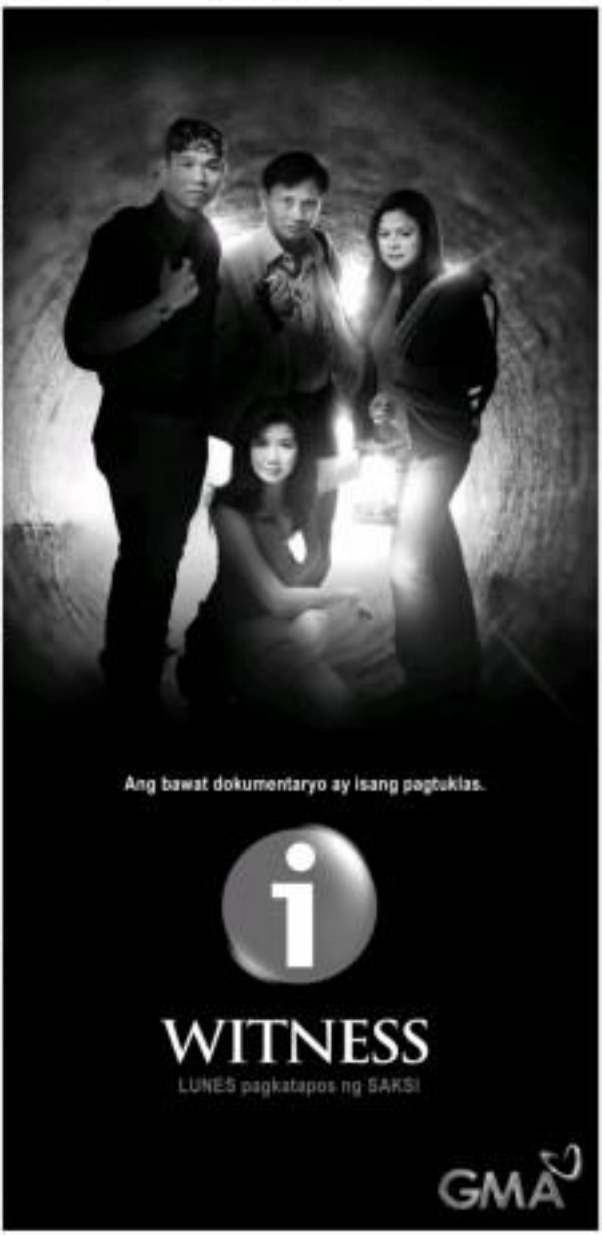
It's not difficult to maintain the Pia Guanio on TV reporting entertainment news from Fun Pia Guanio who is a drinking musician.

"I interviews down my own stories for 'Chika Minute,'" she says. "And I have a hand in script adjustments."

"I Pia," she says, gives her a chance to come face-to-face with the show his people that she reports about on a daily basis.

Contrary to what most people think, an ...ean tends to not just about reading from a script or being a talking head, she insists.

"It's a totally different experience," says Pia. "You have to have your say about you, think on your feet ... and do the same thing speak to perfect Filipino."



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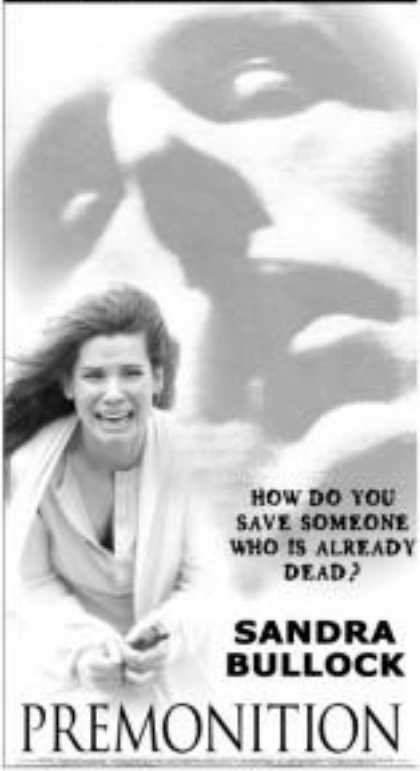

Pia Guanio talks a lot ... but not about Vic Sotto

By Mel Valera

PIA GUANIO LIKES "IT TALK" about anything and everything, except, perhaps, her relationship with Vic Sotto.

Every Sunday, she dishes out information about the love boys, her bikini-wax, boat-ride, undated 40-year-old actors, and sometimes show biz secrets—just about anything...no the lifestyle show "Pinoys," aired on QTV 11, which lists the top 10 of nearly everything.

"I like the show to the sense that it empowers the viewers with information and entertains them at the same time," says Pia, 28, of "Pinoy Pa Yan." Like it because it's balanced and entertaining. It also

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Did You Know...

Name it

MUSIC FANS HAVE the chance to flex their knowledge of pop music in "Stan Freberg's" directed-to-kid Name That Tune Challenge."

The winner will fly to Los Angeles to watch the "American Idol 6: Finale Night Live," all expenses paid, including hotel accommodation.

Twenty-four contestants will battle it out to identify those songs correctly to advance to the next round until a final winner is declared.

Interested participants may tune in to Star World every Monday and Thursday, 6 p.m., 8 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. from March 1 to 31.

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At the Cinemas

IMAX

G1	1 [illegible]	2 300	3 THE HITCHER	4 YOU GOT ME
G4	1 THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS	2 THE GOOD SHEPHERD	3 [illegible]	
	4 NOTES ON A SCANDAL	5 LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA	6 300	7 YOU GOT ME
GB1	1 THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS	2 300		
GB3	1 [illegible]	2 [illegible]		
	3 NOTES ON A SCANDAL	4 THE GOOD SHEPHERD	5 THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS	
ATC	1 [illegible]	2 THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS		
	3 THE HITCHER	4 YOU GOT ME	5 THE GOOD SHEPHERD	
ACC	1 300	2 THE HITCHER	3 IT'S A BOY GIRL THING	4 YOU GOT ME
M2	1 300	2 THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS		
	3 THE GOOD SHEPHERD	4 THE HITCHER	5 YOU GOT ME	

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AYALA CENTER CEBU	MARKET! MARKET!
Looney Tunes presents Lights, Camera ... Showtime! — March 14 to 18, 2007	Nescafé Kiddie Fest — March 16, 2007

Greenbelt | Greenbelt 5 Movie Pass presents Collection of Lola Amaya — March 7 to 14, 2007

Cinefilipino | Repertory Philippines presents Ang Sirena at REP's Onstar Theater - March 15 to April 1, 2007 — For inquiries, pls. call 897-9710

Ayala Museum | CHINESE SHADOWS: Art Streams from the Mainland (via silver) — February 15 to March 31, 2007 — For inquiries, please call 757-7117 ex.31 or visit www.ayalamuseum.org

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ENTERTAINMENT

DAVID and Mary, above, were proven short on navigational skills.

David & Mary bow out, happily

By Rach L. Mariano

DAVID AND MARY DIDN'T need allies to get through the challenges—but they needed better navigational skills. Getting lost at the airport had resulted in a costly delay in reaching their roadblock. Thus, they became the third team eliminated from "The Amazing Race All-Stars"

Earlier, in Season 10, their wide-eyed wonder at the new places they stumbled into and their rapport with the locals made David and Mary the fan-favorites. They became accomplices, then Rosie O'Donnell gave them a bonus and cut short the race.

"Rosie is our angel. Our lives have changed because we don't have to pay for a car now. Our kids can travel," says Mary. So when they were asked to race again for the all-star season, the real winner had one apprehension.

"Physically, we had recovered from Season 10. But as parents, we had a hard time leaving our children for the second time," says David.

What's the difference between Season 10 and "All-Stars"?

Mary: The first time we raced, every thing was fresh...everything was a wonder. In "All-stars" we already knew the people we were up against and they knew us. We

Now they are rooting for 'the ultimate reality TV couple' in their eyes—Rob and Amber

Spidey, Pirates TV sneaks

LOS ANGELES—AN EXCLUSIVE PREview of "Spider-Man 3" aired during NBC's "Heroes" last week. A commercial also invited Spidey fans to catch more than seven minutes of scenes before seeing the homage on the NBC/360 site.

The reality for '93, intro of the Caribbean in World's End" makes its worldwide debut during the "Entering with the Stars" season premiere on March 19—and simultaneously on popular shows in 83 other countries.

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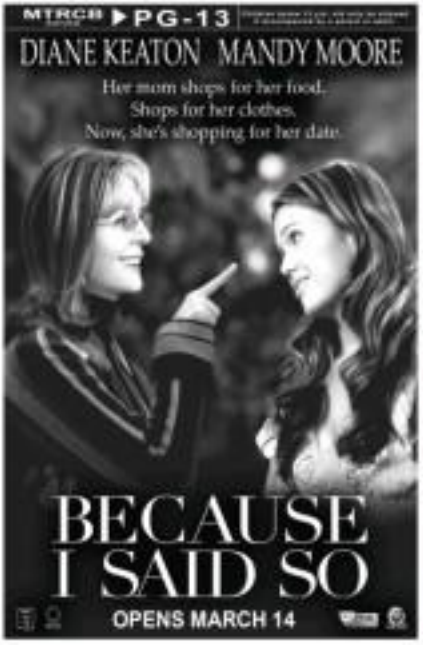

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1 A GOOD SHEPHERD • THX
2 300
3 THE HITCHER
4 DEAD PEOPLE 2
5 Reserved for VICTORY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
6 Reserved for VICTORY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
7 IT's A BOY GIRL THING
8 indieSine: ROME and JULIET
9 THE PURSUIT of HAPPYNESS
10 YOU GOT ME

indieSine Featured FILM
march 07 to 13
Robinsons Movieworld Galleria
Rome and Juliet

ERMITA

1 300
2 IT's A BOY GIRL THING
PRIMEVAL
3 A GOOD SHEPHERD
4 YOU GOT ME
5 THE HITCHER
6 DEAD PEOPLE 2
7 The PURSUIT of HAPPYNESS

METRO EAST

1 THE NUMBER 23
BRIDGE of TERABITHIA
2 300
3 YOU GOT ME
4 THE HITCHER
5 PRIMEVAL
GHOST RIDER
6 A GOOD SHEPHERD
7 The PURSUIT of HAPPYNESS
8 DEAD PEOPLE 2

NOVALICHES

1 300
2 YOU GOT ME
3 The PURSUIT of HAPPYNESS
4 THE HITCHER

PIONEER

1 A GOOD SHEPHERD
2 300
3 The PURSUIT of HAPPYNESS
4 THE HITCHER

STA. ROSA

1 300
2 The PURSUIT of HAPPYNESS
3 THE CLEANER
4 IT's A BOY GIRL THING
5 YOU GOT ME

LIPA

1 GHOST RIDER
2 YOU GOT ME
3 THE NUMBER 23
4 THE FOUNTAIN
5 PRIMEVAL

DASMARIÑAS

1 FLUSHED AWAY
2 300
3 YOU GOT ME
4 The PURSUIT of HAPPYNESS

ANGELES

1 300
2 YOU GOT ME
3 FLUSHED AWAY
4 The PURSUIT of HAPPYNESS

IMUS

1 300
2 PRIMEVAL
3 The PURSUIT of HAPPYNESS
4 YOU GOT ME
5 FLUSHED AWAY

STARMILLS

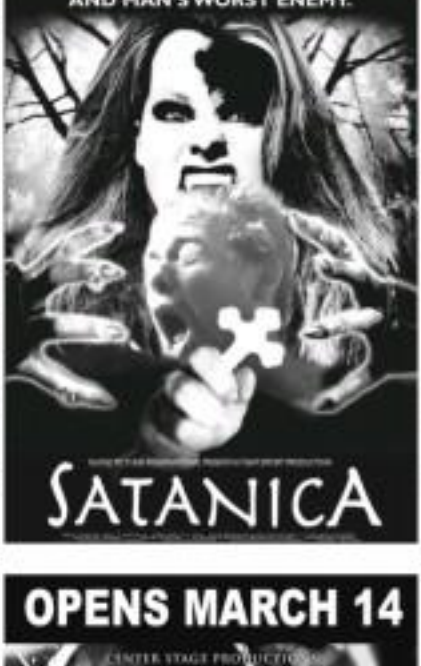
1 The PURSUIT of HAPPYNESS
2 TROIKA
3 YOU GOT ME
4 FLUSHED AWAY
5 300
6 PRIMEVAL

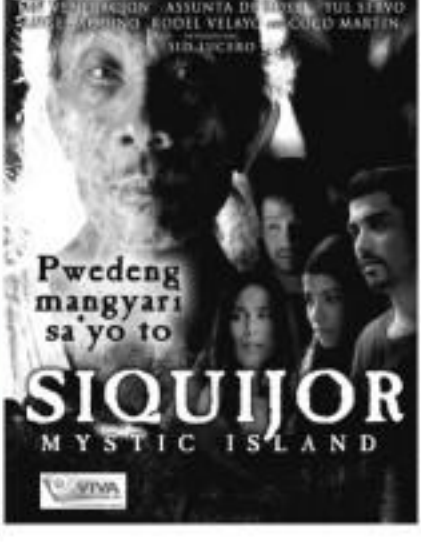
BACOLOD

1 300
2 THE SPIRIT TRAP
3 YOU GOT ME
4 LITTLE CHILDREN
5 PRIMEVAL
6 THE MESSENGERS

ILOILO

1 300
2 YOU GOT ME
3 HANNIBAL RISING
4 PRIMEVAL
5 TROIKA
6 FLUSHED AWAY





David &

all know how everybody pl
David: It's like you were
nd chance and you know
with it.

Is there anything you'd ch
way you played this one?
Mary: I would've still p
nd Silence from the mad l
give them any help with th

If you could've picked a
would it be and why?
David: Irene and Irwin,
still around. It upset me th
my bag out of the overhe
more to the plane and th
present.
Mary: Chuck and Miryu
best them. I didn't like th
stand for. I didn't like th
resisted the other season.
the cab drivers. They were

Who are you rooting for o
Mary: Ikonic to goodn
fish and dusher to win. Th
insane reality TV couple.
I'd kin t the beauty queens

THE COMPANY

Brazilian season

"DISTRIBUCIÓN: BOSSA," T
Company's latest album
brand under Viva Records,
plores the varied rhythms,
tures and moods of Brazil
music.
Featured songs include
Brazilian classic "Lonelier
nem (Tristeza)," James Tay
"Your Smiling Face,"
Bryan's
French disco
classic, "Your
smiles," The
Bobbie's "Ev
ery Little
Thing (Do) Goes to Mag
lends and Cooks 70's hit "G
ther Breeze" and Donna Su
mer's "Whispering Silence."
"The Company's Annie Q
ers, Mary Grace, Cecille Bauti
Sweet Plantacio and Joy
gore.

SPIN Cr

Album launch

Pinoy reggae band Sin
ture festival will launch
second album, "Sinsation
ness, 10:30 p.m. at Xaymaca
Timog Avenue, Quezon City.
Buyers of the group's la
album may take part in the
stival events.
The album, honored by
Bivo 2 Paso original "Tang
Pwede Ba," is available on
under Sony BMG Music En
nimmers.

Worldwide hit

"Truly Madly Deeply," Ca
dy's latest single from her al
"Tawyuan Ah Touch," has a
over one million copies wo
wide.
The songs on the albu
deluxe edition are "Then Do
ly," "Smythe You," "Nearly
Love," "Miracle," "Kids in Am
ica," "Can't Stop the Tra
"Wouldn't It Be Good," "
Boy," "Sweetmelling Drea
"Love Again" and "True M
Virgin."

Bossa nova

Perl, the latest Alpha M
artist catering to the home
genre, has just released her
but album titled "Bossa
dova."
The album is a compilation
famous love songs spun
dreamlet done the bossa n
way.
Among the songs in the
bum are "Nights and Day
Can't Tell You Why," "Call
"The Wind Beneath My Wi
and "The Look of Love."

Mary bow out, happily

From page B1

KENTUCKY couple David, 33, and Mary, 33, resumed a home-and-car from Kevin O'Donnell after the title "Race."

David: Just about everybody to the race deserves to win.

Were you really paranoid about the Bob-and-Amber fandom?

Mary: We're fans of all the teams—the brides, they're the fathers of the sons. You can't have the "All-Stars" without the Chu Chu Chus. Ederoma and Joyce had already won the million dollars. Joyce, she showed her head, they were awesome.

What's next for the two of you?

David: I still want to be a "Survivor."

Mary: There are so many things I did not do as a child. But my kids, they took their first plane ride when they were only 6, 7 and 10. There's a whole world out there that mommy has not seen.

David: Basically that's what we're all about. I'm a road miner; it's just what I want. I would just love to take the kids with me and travel.

Mary: I would love to go to the Philippines. Our kids' pedicurists is from there.

The "Amazing Race All-Stars" airs every Monday, 9 p.m. on ABN.

SLEEPING CONCERT
People take part in a sleeping concert in Madrid on Friday, the first of its kind in Spain. The concert let Japanese pianist Mine Kawakami playing music with the intention of creating an atmosphere so relaxing, that the spectators fall asleep. AFP

Oh, the choices they make

"BRING ME TO LIFE," THE POP rock song by Evanescence, failed to bring to life Rich Asuncion's chances of remaining among the top six survivors of "Pinoy Idol: The Next Level," the reality talent search aired over GMA 7.

Asuncion, a former Miss Tagbilaran, was booted out of the competition a few weeks ago, but regained a survivor spot.

"Inevitably if [said host], Asuncion told buyoson Entertainment, referring to her performance. "I thought rock was my game. Now, it makes that I can't do all the rock songs like this one."

On that show, Sunday before last, Prince Jordan also blew his performance of the oldie "I've Play You Look Tonight," singing the song off-key in parts. "I got distracted," Jordan said. "I forgot the lines when I reached the bridge."

RUSHES

Pinoy Popcorn, who picked Britney Spears' "I'm Not A Girl, Not Yet A Woman," said choosing a song that one was comfortable with was part of scoping in the competition.

Pressure, however, landed in the bottom group that night, along with Dijae Alemania, Jessel Mitche and Prince Stefen. The top four were Kris Bernal, Rich Asuncion, Paulo Avelino and Mari Escudero.

Mitche, Bernal and Escudero had chosen to dance. They're not big on singing, anyway. Ailyn Salcedo

ANTONELLA GARCIA

'Exploited' miss

PORT PLEASANT, New Jersey—Be careful who you trust.

That is the advice from Antonella Barba, New Jersey's "homeschool kid" contestant, a day after being voted off the TV singing competition following rue weeks of turbulence over racy photos posted on the Internet.

"These were photos of my personal life that got exploited without my consent," she said during a conference call Friday with reporters from across the country.

Publicists for the top-rated Fox show cut off reporters' questions about the pictures during the conference call. AP

Salma pregnant

NEW YORK—Keep up for Salma Hayek in a wedding—and a baby carriage.

The 40-year-old actress is engaged to businessman Francois-Henri Pinault and is pregnant with their first child, her spokeswoman, Cari Rose, said Friday in a statement. No further details were provided. AP

Kate wins

LONDON—Actress Kate Winslet was awarded substantial libel damages Friday after The British magazine Grazia wrongly stated that she had entered a diet doctor.

The curvy actress, known for her outspoken criticism of excessive dieting, was not at London's High Court for the hearing. But she said in a statement that she was delighted by the outcome.

"I have always been, and shall continue to be, honest when a comes to body-weight issues," she said. "I feel very strongly that 'curves' are natural, womanly and real." AP

Oldest bride?

JODHPUR, India—"Is it this old woman who's getting married?" asked Kanhaiya Chhabi, a bridal shop manager in the west Indian city of Jodhpur, as she peered over her glasses at a picture of Elizabeth Hurley.

"She is the oldest bride Jodhpur has ever seen," Chhabi said of the 41-year-old actress.

The residents of Jodhpur were not aware of Elizabeth Hurley's existence until she decided to take over the grand palace on a hill overlooking the city on Wednesday for three days to celebrate her marriage to Indian businessman Arun Nayar.

Indian women are commonly married off in their teens to a man of their parents' choosing. Reuters

Boston lead dies

BOSTON (AP)—New Hampshire—Brad Delp, lead singer for the band Boston, was found dead in his home in southern New Hampshire. He was 55.

"There was nothing disrupted in the house. He was a fairly healthy person from what we're able to ascertain," Police Chief Philip Consentino told WBZ-TV, dismissing the possibility of foul play. AP

Clinic sues Love

SANTA ANA, California—A drug rehabilitation center sued Courtney Love, claiming the singer has repeatedly refused to pay her $183,000 bill for her stay at the luxury California resort in late 2005. AP

Prison term, maybe

BEVERLY HILLS, California—"Prison Break" actor Lane Garrison, 26, was charged with manslaughter and drunken driving for a crash that killed a 17-year-old boy in his car.

Garrison could face up to six years and eight months in prison if convicted.

The Dallas native, played Jared "Sweeney" Apolskis on the Fox drama series "Prison Break." His character was killed in an episode last year. AP

SALMA HAYEK

ELIZABETH Hurley greets an unidentified guest at a party hosted by Indian tycoon Uday Purushottam Sondhi in Montreal.

KATE WINSLET